

BREEDING PULL-OUT

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NEWS

- 4 Hat safety remains under scrutiny
- 6 More bogus rides suspected in UAE
- **7** Owners urged to worm count following shocking survey

SPORT HORSE BREEDING SPECIAL

- 4 Stallion Al Revolutionising British breeding
- **12 Covering all bases** Being a multi-talented sire
- **22 Diamond Hit** The super-sire still active at 18
- **28 Vet clinic** Making artificial insemination a success
- **32 Starting from scratch** Top riders on homebreds
- **38 Cloning** Is it changing the face of breeding?
- 50 Carole Mortimer Foaling season comment

PART II: CHELTENHAM PREVIEW

- 20 **H&H interview** Comeback king Leighton Aspell
- **22 Form guide** For the World Hurdle and Gold Cup

FEATURES

- **18 Hunt heroes** Jake a gentleman's gentleman
- **26 Riding in later life** Those deciding to give it a go
- **30 Products** The hottest new launches for 2015

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REPORTS

EVENTING

- 32 Isleham
- 34 Global round-up and Mark Phillips comment

DRESSAGE

- **36** Myerscough Premier League, Patchetts and highlights
- **45** Pammy Hutton comment

SHOWJUMPING

- **46** Hartpury College
- 48 Global focus and round-up: Florida
- **52** Round-ups

HUNTING

54 Curre & Llangibby and Llangeinor Pentyrch

RACING

- **60** Sandown
- 61 Richard Johnson comment

POINT-TO-POINT

- **62** Godstone, Alnwick, Kingston Blount and Llanfrynach
- 65 Darren Edwards comment

REGULARS

- **12 Letters** Have your say
- **14** The best of my fun, I owe it to... Piggy French
- **16 Vet clinic** How rider weight affects horses
- **47** Subscription offer Sign up today for huge savings
- **90** The horse that made me Andrew Hoy

Cover picture by Kevin Sparrow Super-sire Diamond Hit (sport horse breeding special, p22)

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DOYOUHAVEASTORY?

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COVER STORY



Safety development

The sudden removal of the European safety standard—EN 1384—at the end of last year threw the industry into disarray and confused consumers. But with new hat models now being released, could the change mark another major development in the movement to make ridingsafer? Sophia Heath reports

IDERS were left reeling in December when it was announced that a number of hats would no longer be eligible for competition in the near future. The change is the result of a decision by the

European Union (EU) that the EN 1384 standard was to be withdrawn from the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) — the official compendium of EU legislation.

The complete removal of the standard occurred as an agreement could not be reached on updating the base European standard.

The decision means that EN 1384 hats can no longer be manufactured. However, wholesalers and retailers can continue to sell them, and they are still safe to ride in.

The fallout has also caused British governing and riding bodies to reconsider their hat rules and phase out the standard (see box, right).

However, the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) told H&H there is no need for change for riders who wear (BS)EN 1384 but do not compete.

"Hats certified to this standard have

reduced injuries and saved countless lives," said BETA's Claire Williams. "The protection that EN 1384 offers has not changed."

The news left many riders confused about which hats are safe and which they will be able to wear for competitions in future.

Helen Riley, technical and safety product manager for Gatehouse Hats, told H&H that the "short notice" of the decision was "bound to cause confusion".

'Riders are assessing if there is any impact for the hats they currently wear in relation to the riding activities which they participate in, while retailers are assessing what it means for the lines they stock and the type of customers they serve," added Champion's Sarah-Jane Fedarb.

'We are talking to riders and retailers on a daily basis, helping to clarify the situation."

Competition riders

THE new regulations for competition riders have been met with widespread anger from the equestrian community.

'This is ridiculous." said one H&H reader.

"Perfectly safe hats have to be replaced in 12 months due to an agreement not being made?

"Most people can't afford a new helmet just because the EU decides they should," added another.

Tensions have run particularly high in the showing community, where compulsory hat regulations are enforced only by certain societies.

Last year there was widespread criticism when Sport Horse Breeding of Great Britain SHB(GB) announced all competitors must wear safety headgear.

The implementation of the rule led to the British Sports Horse Association (BSHA) taking over the Horse of the Year Show qualifiers, which it is continuing to run in 2015 (news, 5 February).

Upon the introduction of the rule many riders made the switch to the Charles Owen "Fiona" hat, which was designed specifically with show riders in mind.

However, the Fiona is the only hat in the Charles Owen range that does not hit

Organisation guidelines

British Eventing — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter. All hats will be retagged in 2016, at which stage no hats made solely to (BS)EN 1384 will be tagged or permitted for use.

Riding Clubs — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter. All hats will be retagged in 2016, at which stage no hats made solely to (BS)EN 1384 will be tagged or permitted for use.

The Pony Club — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter. Full details of the revised hat tagging procedure will be communicated to the membership and volunteers shortly.

British Dressage — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter.

British Showjumping — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter.

British Horse Society — will permit (BS)EN 1384 hats in 2015 but not thereafter. From 1 January 2016 hats made solely to (BS)EN 1384 will not be permitted for use in BHS Approved Centres.

the PASO15 qualification and is now no longer being made.

The SHB(GB) guidelines state that: "Anyone on a horse at an affiliated show must wear a dark coloured riding hat according to the current approved BSI or European Standard at all times."

Therefore, although the society has not changed its rules, with the removal of the EN 1384 standard the Fiona is no longer acceptable according to SHB(GB)'s rules.

"So, having invested in a new hat just a few months ago — the Fiona — I won't be able to compete," complained one rider.

Looking forward

DESPITE complaints, the removal of the standard has led to new hats entering the market.

Several new designs were unveiled at last month's BETA International (22-24 February).

Patey, one of Britain's most traditional hat makers, launched a new safety standard hat.

The Patey PRO has a carbon fibre reinforced shell and meets the Snell E2001 standard

"It was the much-debated changes in the safety regulations for riders in the UK that prompted Patey to design the new riding cap," a spokesman from the company confirmed.

> For a complete breakdown on what you need to know about the new standards visit: www.horseandhound.co.uk/hat-rules

Pressure on polo

THE polo community is still under pressure to catch up with other equestrian bodies and introduce a minimum standard for headgear.

It is now more than a year since polo legend Carlos Gracida died from head injuries sustained in a freak accident (news, 6 March 2014). The sport was rocked again later in 2014 when Juracy Santos was left in a coma following a fall at the Guards Polo Club. As a result of the accident the club announced it was to introduce a rule on polo hats for the 2015 season.

However, currently neither the Federation of International Polo (FIP) nor the sport's national governing body, the Hurlingham Polo Association (HPA), has a minimum safety standard for helmets. The HPA has told H&H that its "intention is to introduce a minimum standard", but that it is waiting until the issues around the withdrawal of EN 1384 have been "resolved".

A recent survey carried out at the University of Liverpool found that nearly half of all polo players value looks above safety when choosing a new helmet. The study, which was published in

Sports Medicine Open earlier this year (20 January), concluded that "players reported that safety certification was not the most important criterion for helmet selection".

> Roy Burek of Charles Owen — the only company that produces a polo hat to PASO15 standard in the

UK — told *H&H* he was not surprised by the results, given the resistance shown to implementing a safety rule.

"Why would somebody fight against safety advances if they weren't more concerned with what they look like?" he argued.

and traditional style," he added. Robin's project will be finished in May, when further results will be available.

Dressage

Jo Hamilton on road to recovery

DRESSAGE rider Jo Hamilton has been discharged from hospital and is recovering at home, after sustaining a serious head injury in a riding accident in December.

Jo was riding at her yard near Edinburgh on 21 December when she fell from her horse Corchapin. She was on her own, so no one is clear exactly what happened, but she was found shortly afterwards unconscious in the school. She had been wearing a crash hat.

Her mother Flora told H&H that Jo is making "good progress, albeit slower than she would like".

She added that her mobility was improving but that it was a "huge road to recovery" and a few months before she'd be back on a horse.

"Jo has been really encouraged by the many cards and messages of support she has received," Flora added.

One of Jo's horses won at the winter regional championships at Patchetts EC. ➤ See full report p38

Veterinary

Vets vote to adopt 'Doctor'title

VETERINARY surgeons in the UK will now be able to call themselves "Doctor" after a decision by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) last week (5 March).

The issue had been raised in a bid to align the UK with international practice, under which most surgeons use the title.

A consultation found that more than 80% of 11,202 respondents were in favour of the change.

Vets can choose whether to adopt the title, and guidance has been published by the RCVS to support the change.

➤ For further information visit: www.rcvs.org.uk

Dressage

Carl Hester claims grand prix in Doha

CARL HESTER flew the British flag in Doha, Qatar, riding Nip Tuck to victory in the CDI5* grand prix (6 March) at the spectacular Al Shaqab venue.

The 11-year-old Don Ruto x Animo gelding scored 72.6%, closely chased by Sweden's Patrik Kittel (Watermill Scandic).

"It all went to plan," said Carl. "'Barney' is a very spooky horse and you could see I was trying to stop him looking at the flowers out there. He hasn't done many shows like this, so this is a big feeling for him."

The following day, the positions were reversed and Carl took second in the kür, with 76.72% to Patrik's 77.27%.

Carl earned €30,000 (£21,500) over the weekend for his efforts.

POLO player Robin Spicer, who is studying design at Loughborough University, is in the process of designing a helmet that meets safety standards and looks stylish. As part of his research, Robin recently took apart a traditional slimline helmet to assess the level of protection it could provide. "The helmets protect against penetration from outside because they have a hard shell, but they don't stop the energy being transferred into your brain because there is virtually no padding," he said. Part of Robin's new design includes an inbuilt "crash centre" which can notify first responders if you fall when on your own and, in a match situation, can pass on information to the medical team present. "I am aiming to get the right mix between a modern

News

Dressage

Success in France

ALICE OPPENHEIMER won both the young horse prix st georges (PSG) and inter I classes aboard the British-bred Tantoni Sir Soccrates, in week one of Vidauban's fortnight-long show (4-15 March).

The duo scored more than 70% in both classes, with the eight-year-old Sir Donnerhall gelding making his debut at inter I.

"He's such a pro," said 25-year-old Alice.
"He goes in there and it's like he's done it all a million and one times before."

Alice also scooped second place in the grand prix with another plus-70% score, riding the homebred Headmore Delegate.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that we could have such an incredible week," she added.

Olympics

Tokyo's equestrian events on the move

THE equestrian events at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 are to be held at the same site as they were for the 1964 Games.

Dream Island in Tokyo Bay was the planned site for dressage, showjumping and eventing in 2020, but the main equestrian site will now be Baji Koen, the Japan Racing Authority facility.

The move puts the sport into the centre of the Games. The change was approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on 27 February.

The cross-country will remain at Sea Forest in Tokyo Bay.

"The FEI has been working very closely with the Tokyo 2020 organising committee, visiting all venues and carefully considering all options, and we are very impressed with both the Baji Koen and Sea Forest sites," said the FEI's Tim Hadaway.

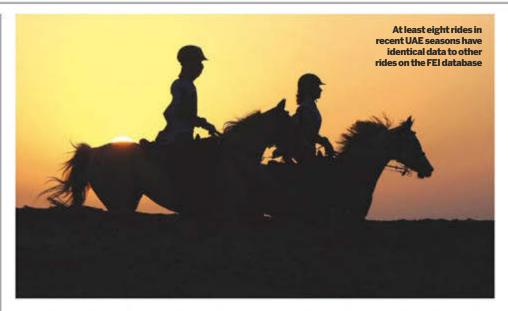
Eventing

Somerley steps in

SOMERLEY PARK in Hampshire will host a second horse trials this summer to fill the void left by the cancellation of Salperton.

The second event will be held on the 27-28 June and will run from novice to advanced intermediate.

Somerley organiser Suzie Cotterill said: "This is the second time in recent years that Somerley has stepped up to the plate to provide an alternative event at relatively short notice, having replaced Wilton in 2012 with just two weeks' notice before."



Endurance

Furtherallegations over 'bogus' UAE rides

THE "bogus" endurance ride mystery has taken a sensational twist with new allegations that results from a number of races in the UAE have been "lifted" from previous FEI rides, writes Pippa Cuckson.

Last week (news, 5 March), H&H carried allegations that a ride listed for Dubai on 21 January did not take place.

Now members of the "clean endurance" community have scrutinised historic results and found that at least eight rides in recent UAE seasons have identical data to other rides on the FEI database.

When first asked about 21 January data, the FEI explained the ride was properly entered in the schedule as a President's Cup qualifier and that paperwork was in order.

After evidence of duplicate data was shown to the FEI, it declined to discuss it in detail.

However, a spokesman said: "As we have already announced, the FEI executive board made finalising its recommendations in relation to issues with endurance in the UAE a top priority.

"The recommendations will be presented to the bureau as speedily as possible. The decision on potential next steps rests with the bureau, and we cannot pre-empt that decision at this stage."

The data for 21 January, a 120km two-star, is embedded in a 230-starter race on 19 December. The speed and loop data of the "top three" are identical to the 13th, 14th, and 16th placed horses from 19 December, with the remaining 39 results identical to completions further down the list. Some horses, including Embrujo AG, subject of a scandal regarding duct-taping blinkers, also ran in a one-star qualifier on 23 December.

All 47 completions of that ride have detailed data identical to the 10th to 56th placed horses at Bou Thib

on 22 November.

The chances of even a single horse replicating another's set of results are minute.

Other unusual features of the "bogus" races are unusually high completion rates, absence from the UAE federation and Dubai and Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club websites, lack of photography, late addition to the FEI calendar, participation of riders solely from the UAE and India, and the same small pool of officials.

Roly Owers, chief executive of World Horse Welfare, underlined the importance of authentic qualifying results.

"Having robust qualification standards for any elite sporting discipline is a fundamental requirement. Any failure in this system would place the welfare of equine athletes in jeopardy."

If the allegations are correct, the FEI faces a major challenge about how to sanction the UAE federation, and the riders, owners and officials.

Topic of the week

Gold Cup in numbers

67.500

A sell-out in 2015, the maximum capacity at Cheltenham on Cheltenham Gold Cup Day (when all temporary facilities are open) is 67,500.



2

Two past winners — Lord Windermere and Bobs Worth — are set to line up for the 2015 race. Seven horses have won the race more than once, but only Kauto Star regained the crown after losing it (2007 and 2009). Can 2013 winner Bobs Worth do it this year?

Veterinary

Are you worming correctly?

"ROUTINE testing, not routine worming" is the message industry experts are trying to put across after a recent study found that 81% of owners are not conducting frequent faecal egg counts (FECs), writes Sophia Heath.

Nearly 1,000 owners were questioned on their current worming procedure and knowledge by equestrian supplier Countrywide. The results showed worrying trends.

"The survey has brought out the disparities in current practice against best practice and how this is leading to the rise in resistance to wormers," said Countrywide's Sara Blackshaw.

Only 31% of owners said they conduct regular FEC tests while nearly 60% of owners said that they routinely worm — interval dosing at set times of the year.

In 2010 the British Veterinary Association (BVA) launched a campaign telling owners that, in order to slow resistance, all worming treatments should be based on veterinary diagnosis.

The owner of Westgate Laboratories, Gillian Booth, is concerned the results show that owners have still not updated "their worming practice to match the increase in resistance and improvement in testing technology".

"Previous worming

Pictures by www.trevor-meeks-photography.co.uk and Jo Prestwich



Owners should be routinely testing for worms and then treating

practices have led to the resistance problems we now have, so it is vital that there is change," she said.

Countrywide's Mark Hawkins added: "Without testing there is no way of knowing if a wormer is being effective. The implications of not worming if it is required, or ineffective worming, can be severe."

Lack of knowledge

THE research also found that a worrying number of owners do not know the accurate weight of the horse they are worming — nearly 40% of people questioned were unclear.

Director of BW Equine Vets, Chris Shepherd, said this figure was "very concerning" as "dosing plays a large role in the increase in resistance".

"If you do need to treat, accurate dosing is essential. Under-dosing promotes

Worming plan

For effective worm control in an adult horse try to test not treat

- ➤ Spring: tapeworm test and FEC for redworm and ascarids
- Summer: FEC for redworm and ascarids
- ➤ Autumn: tapeworm test and FEC for redworm and ascarids
- ➤ Winter: consider worm treatment for encysted redworm, check with your vet (a further FEC test can be conducted in winter to monitor worm burden particularly for youngsters who may be more at risk)

resistance and is similar to giving the worms a vaccine allowing resistance to build up to that particular wormer," Mr Shepherd added.

Industry experts want owners to take an active role in preserving wormers that are currently effective.

European veterinary advisor at Norbrook Pharmaceuticals, Rebekah Dudek, warned: "If we continue to worm simply 'as we always have,' there is a chance we will eventually be left with no efficacious wormers in our arsenal, meaning we would have to rely on management strategies as the only option to control worm burdens."

Horses in the news

WILD DICE BEWES

The WBS UK champion stallion died on 26 February following a colic attack. He sired horses in many disciplines, including the prix st georges dressage

horse Wild Star Bewes and the CIC1* eventer Wild Rose. He was by Wildcard out of the heavily line-bred mare AA Bewes, who was by Atlantus and out of an Atlantus mare.



K

NACARAT

The popular grey ex-racehorse died last week following an accident at home. When trained by Tom George, Nacarat won the Grade One totesport Bowl at Aintree, Charlie Hall Chase

and Racing Post Chase. He retired to owner Simon Clarke's home and he had been enjoying a second career hunting.

NIRVANA

The dressage gelding passed away in his field last month. "He was a very special horse. A massive thanks to Diana Barley for allowing me 4

to ride him and have some amazing experiences with him," said para rider Erin Orford.

1

AFLAME

The Arabian racehorse has been put down aged 31. The horse won many races, including his last at the age of 18, ridden by amateur jockey Peter Winks. The horse also gave Peter's son Ryan his first winner.

CAVALRYMAN

Godolphin's Group One winner has died after breaking his right hindleg during the Nad Al Sheba Trophy at Meydan. Trained by Saeed bin Suroor, last season the nine-year-



old won the Princess of Wales's at Newmarket and the Goodwood Cup.

Key statistics from new survey

99% of people worm their horse at least once a year

31% of owners conduct regular FEC tests

67% of those questioned believe they are protecting their horses from the rise of resistance

of respondents are still choosing their worming product based on active ingredient and time of year

38% of owners do not accurately know the weight of

of people questioned still rely on just a routine wormer when bringing a new horse into a yard



Л

Paul Nicholls has sent out the winner of the race four times. If he wins this year with Silvianco Conti he'll equal the record set by Tom Dreaper. At 3-1 Silvinaco Conti is the favourite...

£1.050.000

The amount of prize money in pounds sterling on offer on Cheltenham Gold Cup Day.



10oz

A new Cheltenham Gold Cup is minted each year and there are 10 ounces of gold in the trophy making it worth around £10.800.

Jeremy Kyle fans

The daytime chat show host and racehorse owner has teamed up with Racing UK to spearhead its marketing campaign for the Cheltenham Festival. Jeremy will also appear as a pundit on the channel for the four days of the Festival.

An endangered breed

▲ Two Eriskay ponies have been given a new home at Fancy's Farm in Portland, Dorset. Quiver and Quintus both needed new accommodation after their owner fell ill.

Ben Maher

↑ The Britishrider and the chestnut mare Diva II soared to victory in the \$372,000 (£246,208) FEI world cup grand prix in Wellington, Florida on 7 March.

Dieters

▲ Dragons'Den's Deborah Meaden has revealed that her secret behind keeping fit for her Strictly Come Dancing appearance two years ago was riding. She said her "legs didn't hurt once" because she was riding regularly.

Good week

Bad week

Jason Maguire

The jockey has missed the Cheltenham Festival for the second year running. In 2014 he was injured, this year he has been sidelined with a non-trier ban.



Horse of the Year Show

▼ HOYS'organisers were left red-faced after inappropriate content was posted on its Facebook page by hackers. The intruders managed to stop HOYS being able to access the account for several days.



Michael Jackson

▼ The eventer's pride was dented when he fell off on the flat for the first time in a dressage lesson.

Horse owners in Staffordshire

▼ Police are warning equestrians to up their security after a spate of thefts. Police have said there has been an "exceptional increase" in the theft of horse equipment in the past three months

News

Olympics

Qatarheading for Rio

EWS that the Qatari showjumping team has qualified for its first ever Olympic Games has brought into focus again the tougher task facing Britain, Ireland and other top European sides still struggling to get a ticket to Rio 2016, writes Pippa Cuckson.

Qatar qualified last month (19 February) on the strength of winning a straightforward two-round Nations Cup in Abu Dhabi. Trained by Dutch supremo Jan Tops — Olympian and founder of the Global Champions Tour — the Qataris are understood to have an even bigger budget for horses than Saudi Arabia enjoyed in the run-up to London 2012, where the country won team bronze.

Qatar was without doubt the strongest of the Middle Eastern squads on the day, although teams from the rest of the world making up the numbers — notably Germany and the Netherlands — were not fielding elite riders.

In contrast, Britain will be fighting for its Rio place at the European championships in the huge grass arena of Aachen. Team GB will need to be within the top three teams — that are not already qualified — to head to Rio.



Britain missed out on qualification at the World Equestrian Games last year, by failing to finish in the top five. Qatar beat Britain there by three places, in 15th.

Remaining teams from North and South America also have to qualify at a continental championship — the Pan Am Games — although Brazil automatically runs at Rio as hosts.

Asked why qualification for Middle Eastern teams appears easier, the FEI explained that

there was no suitable continental championship—the Asian Games are held over courses not exceeding 1.40m. There are similar constraints for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and South-East Asia and Oceania, for which special qualifying events are designated.

"The qualification system is reviewed and approved by the International Olympic Committee before publication," said an FEI spokesman.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Farewell to... Michael Dun

FORMER amateur jockey and commentator Michael Dun died last month (1 February). He was 54 years old.

Michael rode his first pointto-point winner at the age of 15, and went on to have 52 pointing winners and 14 wins under Rules.

In recent years Mr Dun had turned to commentating and called at many fixtures in the Northern area. He had been commentating at the West Percy point-to-point less than 24 hours before his death.

"He was an optimist, an inspiration to many and a charming entertainer," a spokesman for the family said.

Mr Dun is survived by his wife Jane, children Graham and Charlotte, parents Robin and Sheila, and brother Gordon.

Richard Hughes calls time on career

CHAMPION Flat jockey Richard Hughes (pictured, below) will be retiring at the end of the Flat season.

The 42-year-old has been champion jockey for the past three seasons and is stable jockey for trainer Richard Hannon

The son of trainer Dessie Hughes, who died last year, will be following in his father's footsteps as he plans to start a



training career when he retires from the saddle. He has recently attended a trainers' course in Newmarket.

BS assists ex-racer career changes

A new national championship class has been introduced for registered retrained racehorses competing at British Showjumping's (BS) club level.

The top 30 horse and rider combinations from the Retraining of Racehorses (RoR) national club league will compete for a prize fund of £1,000 at the RoR club championships.

This will take place at the BS National Showjumping Championships at Stoneleigh Park in August (12-16 August). > Riders need to register with RoR once they have joined at www.ror.org.uk





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www.naf-equine.eu/uk

AT THE RACES



THE WEEK AHEAD...

Gold Cup day

Watch the best horses and jockeys battle it out in the Cheltenham Gold Cup (13 March). Can't make it? See the action on Channel 4 from 12.35pm. www.cheltenham.thejockeyclub.co.uk

Horses Inside Out Conference

A workshop focusing on limb dissection will take place at Hartpury College, Glos on 14 March. www.horsesinsideout.com/dissections

Go eventing

Poplar Park Horse Trials in Suffolk takes place from 14-15 March, with sections from BE80(T) to advancedintermediate. www.britisheventing.com

See equestrian art

Artwork by Elisabeth Frink will be displayed at the Bohun Gallery. Oxon from 14 March until 11 April. www.bohungallery.co.uk





@TapnerEventing I've gotta do dreaded beep fitness test today so highly mature breakfast! #EliteLevelAthlete

HORSE:HOUND

COST OF YOUR FIRST FOAL

Paul Tapner

If you're thinking about breeding your first foal, check out this guide to the associated costs, so you don't get an unpleasant surprise

www.horseandhound.co.uk/breeding-costs

views
Do you ever wonder about your
horse's sense of humour? If you've
been embarrassed by your horse
(and let's been honest, how many
of us haven't?) then you need to
read this... www.horseandhound.



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www.twitter.com/horseandhound



www.pinterest.com/horseandhound

Breeding

Irish plans to secure breeding industry

10-year "roadmap" to help to secure the future of the Irish sport horse industry was launched in Dublin last week (3 March), writes Sophia Heath.

A wide range of issues, including enhancing quality through more focused breeding, improving marketing and sales capacity across the industry and increasing participation in the sector are in the report, entitled "Reaching new heights: report of Irish sport horse industry strategy committee". There are 35 key recommendations.

Simon Coveney, minister for agriculture, food and the marine, "commended" Horse Sport Ireland, Teagasc (the Irish agriculture and food development authority) and the Royal Dublin Society for "combining their expertise to produce the comprehensive report".

The breeding industry in Ireland hit a crisis point during the recession, with overbreeding resulting in the value of horses plummeting. In 2009, the number of calls reporting abandoned or compromised horses increased by 150% (news, 14 January 2010).



A 10-year plan is aimed at transforming the Irish sport horse industry

In 2013 Horse Sport Ireland reported that the quality of foals was improving, and that it had seen a significant drop in the number of foals being registered.

Mr Coveney said he had been "conscious of the absence of a coherent vision and plan for the sport horse sector".

"We have all the natural advantages for horse breeding and production in this country: a natural affinity for the horse, an abundance of horsemanship and world-class riders," he added.

"I believe that the report provides the framework to

harness our resources in order to achieve our goals."

Horse Sport Ireland chairman Pat Wall said that the report was an "important milestone" for the sector.

The minister has also given a commitment to providing funding of up to €2m (£1.4m) for a network of breeder discussion groups to determine best practice.

"The absence of such a local/regional system in the equine sector has limited the opportunities for many breeders to improve their knowledge and skills to meet market demands," Mr Wall added.

Racing

Pendleton set to switch saddles

EVENTER Chris King and British eventing team chef d'equipe Yogi Breisner have teamed up with champion trainer Paul Nicholls in a

mission to help cyclist Victoria Pendleton ride at the 2016 Cheltenham Festival.

The gold medal-winner sat on a horse for the first time two weeks ago, and is now aiming to obtain an amateur jockeys licence.

Her ambition is to ride in the Foxhunter at Cheltenham next year.

"Victoria is a hugely talented, ambitious and gutsy individual, and these traits will stand her in the best stead possible for achieving this ambitious goal," said Yogi.

"Having worked with her for a week, the progress she has already made in such a small amount of time is quite frankly remarkable. It's a real privilege to work with Victoria on a challenge of this magnitude."

The challenge has been set up by Betfair, to provide an "unexpected and entertaining perspective on horseracing, while also profiling the skills, athleticism and courage faced by jockeys every day".

"I'm motivated by the scale of the challenge and the opportunity to combine my love of horses with learning a new skill." said Victoria. AM Pictures by Peter Nixon, Bill Selwyn and Betfair

co.uk/horse-humour

Eventing

Protest against pins rule

A controversial change to the FEI's frangible pin rule has resulted in a protest by the International Event Riders Association (ERA Int), writes Sophia Heath.

The FEI's 2015 eventing rule clarifications state that 21 penalties will be given automatically to any competitor breaking a frangible obstacle or device (pictured, right) unless "clear mechanical failure has produced an unexpected activation of the mechanism" (news, 26 February).

However, ERA Int is "openly opposed to the revision", which it claims "effectively removes the ground jury of an FEI event from the decision-making process".

In a letter to all of its members, ERA Int set out eight reasons why the organisation is against the change.

"This is a complex issue, and while we respect the intention of the FEI to have rapid and clear decisions made at the event, we are highly concerned with the implications of this rule change," ERA Int president Bruce Haskell said.

One of the ERA's primary concerns is that the rule change could make the sport less safe as



course-designers could be put off using pins.

"Designers have said they will now consider using fewer devices based on the possible effect a breakage has on the outcome of a competition," the letter states.

ERA Int is proposing that 25 penalties for dangerous riding should be integrated into decisions about pins, rather than punishing every pin break.

As H&H went to press (9 March), ERA Int was due to attend a meeting with the FEI eventing committee to discuss the issue on Tuesday 10 March.

And finally...Around the world

DID you always win the "round the world" competition at Pony Club camp? Ever wondered how you could put your spinning skills to good use? Well, now is your chance as H&H's charity of the year — the Society for

the Protection of



Animals Abroad (SPANA) — is urging riders to give it a go again. The idea is simple... Get a friend to video you doing as many "round the worlds" as you can in 30 seconds. Post the video on social media so that everyone can admire your childhood talent. Then, most importantly, text WORLD to 70300 to donate £3 to SPANA and help working equines around the world.

Hopefully it will be the next viral sensation, and it has to be more enjoyable than throwing a bucket of iced water over your head! SH

➤ H&H strongly recommends that someone holds your horse while taking part to avoid any accidents.



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Letters



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THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Sir — I found the article "How horse sport has evolved" (features, 19 February) interesting. I can remember doing British Dressage on grass and none of us thought anything of it. There was the odd exception where a venue had surfaces, but it was for the higher levels. Any schooling I did was either in the field or out hacking, as I had no arena.

I agree with David Broome — riders have become too precious and cannot deal with balancing a horse on a slope or take into account the wet or dry conditions.

Riders rely too much on technology, rather than the instinctive feel and judgement of our great riders in the past.

The art of the tuck and roll has certainly gone. I can vouch for that, as I spend much of my working week teaching students encased in body protectors which, if they fall, prevent them rolling or moving out of the way. Instead they lie like turtles with legs and arms waving in the air.

Clarissa Dawson

Shipston-on-Stour, Warks

THAT LITTLE GIRL

Sir — Not long after we moved to our present house, we used to see a small girl and her pony, both immaculately turned out. My husband who is not horse-minded at all, always enthused about the "little girl and her pony" who was led by her dad. We used to see her later at riding club events, going over her dressage tests before entering the arena.

Sarah Millis (feature, 19 February) has come a long way from the riding club field and riding round local lanes.

LHarris

Fulking, W Sussex

Letter of the week **ENCOURAGING NEW JUDGES**

Sir — In response to your article "Who would be a judge?" (features, 26 February), I would not wish future judges to be deterred.

Judging other people's horses and ponies is an honour and a privilege that — as the article rightly points out — can provide judges with a range of opportunities they would not otherwise have.

Judging is not about expenses but about putting something back into the sport from which we all gain so much pleasure and enjoyment. Yes, there will be the odd occasion when exhibitors do not behave as well as one might hope, but judging is subjective and often the basis for a friendly argument.

In my experience (judging for more than 30 years), exhibitors are generally delightful and a pleasure to judge. It is rare to experience incidents of poor behaviour. Therefore, if you want to put something back into your sport, do not be put off. Take up the challenge of becoming a judge and enjoy having the opportunity to see at first hand our wonderful range of show horses and ponies.

Paul Cook

Chairman of The British Show Pony Society judges assessment committee

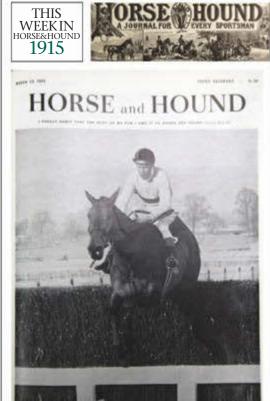
The writer of the letter of the week wins a bottle of Champagne Taittinger

ATEST OF PERSEVERANCE

Sir — I read with interest that the Pony Club is hosting a party in June for past and present members who hold its highest test accolade — the A Test.

My daughter, Helen, passed her A Test in 2000. Helen joined the Wokingham branch of the Pony Club as a small child and worked through the tests. She was due to sit the A Test a few months before her 21st birthday, but a freak fall the week before the exam landed her in plaster for six months. As the upper age limit was then 21 years it was a cruel blow. After petitioning by local A Test examiner, Sarah MacDonald, Helen was given permission to rejoin for one additional year to allow time to rearrange a test date.

Now running her own business as a master saddler and harness maker, Helen finds the time to put something back into the local Pony



Arkle, ridden by Pat Taaffe, clears the final fence before galloping home to his second triumph — out of three — in the Cheltenham Gold Cup.



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SOMETHING TO SAY?

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SHOWING SPECIAL

Guest-edited by Jayne Ross

FEATURING:

Where is the next generation of ride judges?; Harley Foxtrot stripped bare; how to ride true to type in the ring; Sarah Emmerson on swapping science lessons for red rosettes

THE BEST OF MY FUN

Laura Tomlinson reveals all

CHELTENHAM SPECIAL REPORT

All the action from the Festival

Clubs as an instructor and test examiner and has already booked her place to attend in June.

Diana Reader

Carmarthen, Wales

AJUDGE'S STYLE

Sir — Stuart Hollings in "The best of my fun, I owe it to..." (26 February) writes that the best bit of riding he had ever seen was Joan Fleming and Harry Tatlow at the Royal International. I reported from the Royal Welsh Show for Horse & Hound for 58 years until I reached my 80th birthday in 2012. At the 1967 Royal Welsh Show, the hunter iudge Ronnie Marmont had ridden 17 hacks, four classes of 51 hunters and ended up judging 15 Welsh cobs in a class won by Honyton Michael ap Braint.

Llanarth Cymro was ridden side-saddle by his owner, the authoress Olwen Way, and everyone expected Mr Marmont to change saddles but he

decided otherwise. His sidesaddle gallop on Llanarth Cymro in front of the grandstand at Llanelwedd was a sight never to be forgotten.

Dr Wynne Davies, MBE Ceulan, Miskin, Pontvclun

VETS AT RISK

Sir — Following your article on mental health in the veterinary industry (news, 26 February), I ask why do vets not wear more protective equipment such as a helmet and body protector?

Clearly some protective gear might interfere with the carrying out of certain specific procedures, but it is perhaps time for the profession's governing bodies to come up to date, rethink its safety protocols and consider just when, where and how the wearing of suitable protective gear could reduce risk for vets.

Tom Steven

Kirknewton, West Lothian

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The best of my fun, I owe it to...

My favourite pub...

We have a pub at the end of our road [in Maidwell, Northants] that is very handy for getting a quick feed. But I don't know where I'd go for something a bit more special. I love food, but I can't stand the froth and jus things you get at fancy restaurants. So as long as it wasn't that, I don't mind.

When I'm watching...

Showjumping and National Hunt racing. Showjumper Marcus Ehning and jockey Ruby



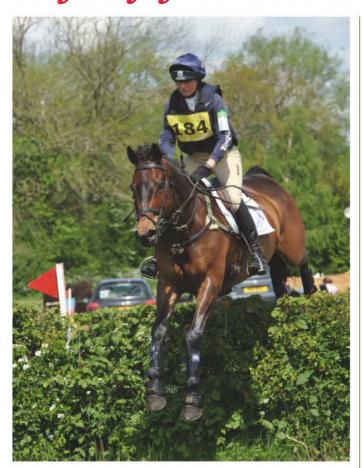
Walsh in particular are a joy to watch – they are both in such beautiful balance with their horses.

Looking back and laughing at my horsey blunders...

Trot-ups are generally hazardous for me. At the European eventing championships in August 2011 with Jakata - which was my first team call-up – I was wearing nude stockings and one of them just wouldn't stay up. So I ended up taking it off there and then and handing it over to [team trainer] Yogi Breisner – I genuinely wanted to die! Not only that, but I then lost my shoe at the second trot-up.

At Burghley in 2013 Westwood Mariner shot sideways when everyone clapped as he was accepted, and knocked me over.





Piggy French

The eventer tells H&H why she's in awe of jockey Ruby Walsh's riding, about nerveracking trot-ups, 'scary' cities — and flashing her knickers at Burghley

I'd made the mistake of wearing a dress and showed my panties to everyone. It's easy to laugh about it now, but at the time it was fairly horrendous. Now I get more nervous about the trot-up than anything else.

When I'm getting away from it all...

I haven't been away anywhere for a while but my boyfriend Tom [March] and I like to get away from it all if we can. Anywhere quiet, pretty and

They are scary places. When I am in the lorry listening to...

Heart FM on the radio. I'm not fussy about music, as long as I can sing along.

with good food will keep me

and sunny too.

of cities...

happy — but preferably warm

When I'm steering clear

My most memorable win...

Winning the individual silver medal at the 2009 European Championships stands out. It was my first senior appearance and I was called up late as a reserve with little expectation.

It was a great learning experience for me, and not only was it a great result on paper, but I was so proud of how Some Day Soon performed. He was a difficult horse but he really excelled himself in all three phases that week.

Settling down with...

A copy of Horse & Hound - I'm afraid I don't get any more intellectual than that. But I did manage to read Fifty Shades Of Grey! The next

book I'll read, when I finally get to go on holiday, will be Jennifer Saunders' autobiography, Bonkers. She's an owner of mine and I'd love to know more about her.



My biggest indulgence...

I don't really indulge myself much but we have just employed a cleaner once a week, which certainly feels like a luxury. It's so lovely coming in after a long day riding and having the house smelling of roses, rather than wet dogs and horses.

When I'm tucking into my burger van staple of...

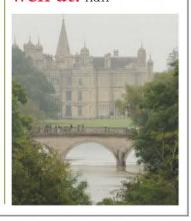
A sausage and egg roll. But the sausages have to be well done.

My first pony...

Sonny. His nickname was Bunions - I don't know why. Apart from being grey (grooming is not my strong point) he was a perfect first pony. He was calm and friendly and I did all Pony Club activities with him

When I'm competing at...

Burghley Horse Trials. It's my favourite event a great place, with a great atmosphere. It's an event that I would love to do well at. H&H



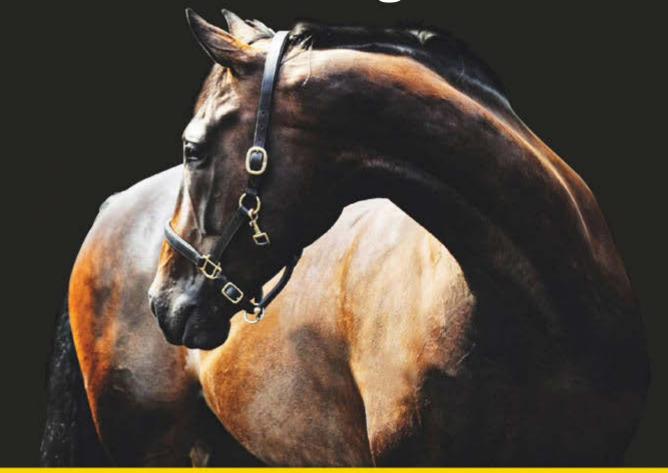
-meeks-photography.co.uk, Bill Selwyn and Ronald Hogrebe

MY PLAN B: if it hadn't been eventing...

I have no idea what I would have done. Horses and eventing are all I have ever wanted to do and I wasn't very good at school so it's probably the only thing I could have done — which is lucky!

14 HORSE & HOUND • 12 MARCH 2015

Outstanding Results





BETA Innovation Award

"When I purchased Ivor he was very poor. He showed all the traits of having a sensitive stomach and I found that he couldn't tolerate feeds with cereal grains in them. Within four days of feeding UlsaKind Cubes I noticed a huge difference in him. Ivor became a lot more mellow, relaxed and happier to be around and touch. It doesn't sound much but I feel our bond has grown stronger with his new happier and more relaxed outlook on life especially around grooming time. He has been hunting through the winter and already he has maintained his condition and his coat looks super shiny. UlsaKind Cubes will most definitely be part of Ivor's diet from now on, he looks in great condition even in the middle of winter and he is so much more happy and comfortable being groomed and touched!" Julie Wright

"Since feeding TopSpec UlsaKind Cubes we have seen a significant improvement in the horses fed on it, including several winners." Emma Lavelle, racehorse trainer











As people get heavier, the danger of overloading our horses looms larger. But how can we calculate when too much weight poses a welfare risk? Karen Coumbe MRCVS and Anne Bondi, director of the Saddle Research Trust, investigate



Rider weight, balance and skill will affect an individual horse's ability to work well and the effect on his musculoskeletal system, but the saddle is also important

OW much weight can a horse carry? It's never going to be an easy question to answer, as there are many factors to consider when working out the appropriate weight for any one horse to support.

The handicapping system used in racing, where the top-rated horse is given the highest weight to carry, proves the importance of weightcarrying in relation to performance. The British Horseracing Authority employs a team of skilled handicappers whose job it is to study racehorse form and a long list of other variables. They assign specific weights as a handicap to put better horses at a disadvantage over less successful ones, thus working on the well-tested theory that the weight a horse carries affects the speed at which he can gallop. By adjusting this, performance is modified.

The same concept is relevant beyond racing and is not only applicable to horses travelling at speed. The greater the weight carried, the more effort a horse has to put in.

Slim pickings

THERE is limited scientific evidence available at present to help decide whether a rider is too heavy for a horse.

No straightforward formula provides appropriate weight ratios for horse/rider combinations, simply because horses are individuals, and so many complex variables are involved. The factors linked to how much weight a horse can carry include:

- > A healthy horse will be stronger and more able to carry heavier loads than one with questionable soundness.
- > Fitness and preparation of both horse and rider are crucial to prevent injury.
- > Type and conformation: a horse's skeletal structure needs

to be strong enough to carry extra weight. An Animal Health Trust study showed that thoroughbreds are more commonly seen with thoracolumbar pain associated with impinging spinous processes compared with warmbloods or crossbreds. This may relate to back length and the closeness of the spinous processes.

120 140 160

200

Back length becomes important when a large person with a big seat requires a long saddle, which can be too long for a short-backed horse. A rigid saddle tree should not extend beyond the top of the last rib.

Some conformational issues reduce a horse's ability to carry weight. For example, a dipped or sway back is a weakness at high risk of strain.

➤ Gait and posture are also affected by training and previous injury. Correct head and neck carriage with hind-limb engagement will influence weight-carrying ability, as the whole musculoskeletal system is interlinked.

A ridden horse has to cope with the static weight of the rider as well as a shifting load when exercised, and will compensate by altering his gait. The effect of the load can increase the extension (hollowing) of the horse's back, and this may contribute to the onset of kissing spines.

> Age: if the horse's musculoskeletal system is immature, such as a young racehorse, or if it is old and frail.

such as an ageing pony with a growing child rider, it will find it harder to cope with greater loads and will be more at risk of injury. As with people, older horses generally have stiffer backs.

> Condition: being overweight significantly reduces the efficiency of movement, whereas an underweight animal may lack strength and energy. A study of endurance horses found that a good condition score was a more important factor for performance than the weight of the rider.

Saddle fit and rider skill are critical for efficient load-carrying. If the saddle, rider or horse are asymmetric, it will cause imbalance and make the horse work harder to compensate.

A rider who cannot follow the horse's rhythm and sits awkwardly increases the likelihood of back pain, while a heavier, poor rider also compounds the effect of a badly fitting saddle.

Saddle design should reduce peak pressures by providing as large and soft a bearing surface as possible. Horses change shape throughout the seasons and according to workload and nutrition. Therefore, saddle fit should be checked regularly.

➤ Speed: a linear relationship exists between acceleration, mass (rider weight) and the forces exerted by the rider on the horse's back under the saddle. It is a basic formula that the force is equal to the mass times acceleration, and so the effect of rider weight is likely to be greater at faster

speeds compared with the walk. Riding style can alter these forces

— the modern jockey position, for example, uncouples rider movements from a horse's locomotion and allows him to move faster.

➤ Type of work: high-impact work such as jumping or the sudden stops and turns seen in polo are harder to sustain with a heavy load, compared with the slow plod of a donkey. Additional weight of up to 15% has been shown to alter jumping technique significantly in horses and is likely to be more challenging with a bigger fence, with a larger drop, or with a rider who lands poorly.

A well-balanced rider is better than dead weight, which is why the requirement for eventers to carry a minimum of 75kg, regardless of size, was abolished in 1998.

➤ Duration and surface type: it is one thing to carry a heavy load for five minutes, another entirely

What's best for welfare?

A recent Saddle Research Trust workshop discussed the challenge of finding appropriate welfare and performance guidelines with the lack of supporting science. As a starting point it was suggested that we consider 15% as average for light work and that loads of 20% might compromise the welfare of the horse.

A 10% ratio was also suggested, but although less weight might help performance, it means a rider would need to weigh less than 50kg to ride an average 500kg thoroughbred. This is restrictive when considering that the average person weighs 70kg.

A survey of weight ratios in riding school clients supported this, showing a variation of between 14.2% and 16.6%. This fits well with the suggestion of 15% for average performance, but the study reviewed only 50 riders and not all were the optimum weight.

The Saddle Research Trust

THE Saddle Research Trust is a charitable organisation that scientifically and objectively leads and supports research into the influence of the saddles on horse and rider performance, in order to help animal welfare.

> Find out more at www. saddleresearchtrust.com

The bigger picture

IT makes sense that when horses carry a greater load in relation to their bodyweight, performance and safety are compromised and the risk of musculoskeletal damage is increased.

Tests have shown that heart rate and some blood test results increase significantly with an increasing load and changes in gait are also recorded.

Back pain is always a potential issue with ridden horses, and everything possible must be done to minimise this risk. The rider, saddle and their combined weight should be considered. Even so, it is wrong to discourage the heavier rider who is riding slowly and steadily in a well-fitting saddle. Such a rider may be better than an inept, lighter rider with a badly fitting saddle.

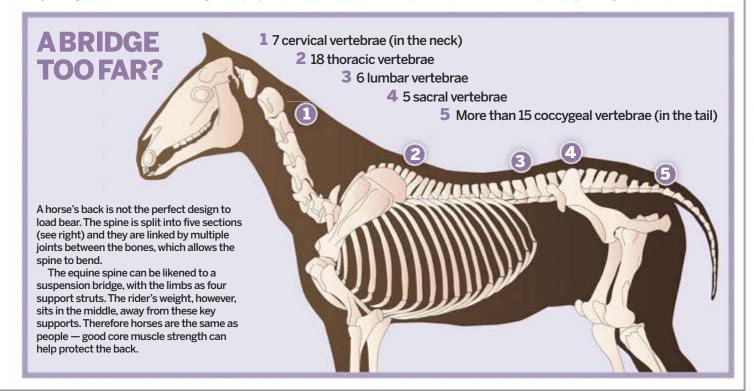
This is a situation of horses for courses: instead of relying on a formula it is better to look at the bigger picture — if it looks wrong, it probably is. H&H

No straightforward formula provides appropriate weight ratios for individual horse/rider combinations, as many complex variables are involved

to lug it for several hours — not to mention the obvious difference between working on a hard, dry surface or through deep mud.

Similarly, going uphill requires harder work than on the flat, because the hind limbs have to carry more weight to provide greater propulsion.

Another small study looked at the load-bearing capacity of six native Japanese ponies and how their gait altered when their loads increased up to the extreme 29% of their bodyweight. The ideal is to have horses comfortable to work effectively, and not be overwhelmed as beasts of burden.



HUNT HEROES Celebrating Britain's best hunters

Despite an inauspicious debut and some bizarre quirks, Jake has done 250 days' hunting. **Hannah Rose** finds out more about this 'gentleman's gentleman'

ITH a combined age of 100, Jake — a 26-year-old bright bay warmblood — and David Gurney, 74, make the perfect hunting team.

"I purchased Jake from Nicky Parfitt in January 1997," says David, of Bawdeswell Farm, Norfolk. "She had found him for me in a very small field in Kent or Sussex and thought he may be suitable."

David — who has hunted with three packs of harriers, 11 packs of foxhounds, 15 packs of beagles and three other foot packs as well as hunting in France, Canada and South Africa — is a true hunting enthusiast.

"I first hunted Jake as my second horse autumn hunting at Bawdeswell Farm on 13
September 1997," remembers David. "He was highly excited and after less than an hour I decided to take him home. While hacking home, hounds in full cry came up behind us in a wood, Jake took off over a big round bale, a branch hit me midship and I fell off backwards breaking two ribs and cracking a third — not a good start. Jake, despite being new, bolted for home straight across a main road."

Despite the shaky start the pair have attended 250 hunting days together with the West Norfolk Foxhounds, and David can only recall coming off him four times.

He dislikes oak trees

THE horse has his quirks. He dislikes oak trees and will often "skirt around them, which is a bit disconcerting in traffic". But he has given David 39 particularly

memorable days of his 250, 13 of which were over 30-milers.

David recalls one day in November 2006 when Jake led the field for 5½ miles and in November 2011 a shorter day at Bawdeswell — which included 3½ miles very fast and then three more at "a quick pace".

This detailed information is down to David keeping a hunting diary from 1989.

Michelle Procter-Smith, who looks after staff and horses at Bawdeswell Farm, compares Jake to a hippogriff, the fictional creature with which Harry Potter fans will be familiar as being easily offended, a beast that you must never insult.

Jake, who stands at 17.1hh, is especially awkward about having his head touched.

"If I have a short groom I have to supply a ladder when his forelock needs doing until he gets used to the groom," says Michelle. "And that is only when he decides."

David says that his quirky behaviour on the yard means he "does not like coming out of his box or going back into the stable"

"He always has to stop and look first," David adds. "On occasions getting him on to the trailer going hunting can be frustrating."

Yet David is full of admiration. "He has been a wonderful horse for me," he says. "He is so comfortable to ride and has taken me and led the field through many hairy places."

Nick Saffell, joint-master of the West Norfolk foxhounds, sums Jake up as "a gentleman's gentleman". H&H







T is not so long ago that the sun would invariably have set on a jump jockey's career by his late 30s and he would have settled down with pipe and slippers.

But due to a number of improvements in the jockey's lot, a select band of the weighing room's elder

improvements in the jockey's lot, a select band of the weighing room's elder statesmen, AP McCoy and Richard Johnson included, are riding better than ever.

The sun may, indeed, be going down on 19-time champion AP's career with a blindingly golden hue, but it is currently refusing to budge from its position high in the sky for Leighton Aspell, 38. However, had he not had a change of heart after 18 months out of the game in 2007, he would now have been long forgotten, if not by racing itself, certainly by its headline writers.

Instead, in the past 12 months he has carved his name in the jockey column for jump racing's two most prestigious handicap chases; the Crabbie's Grand National on Pineau De Re and the Hennessy Gold Cup on Many Clouds.

Tomorrow, he and Many Clouds bid to win what most professional jockeys regard as the

pinnacle of National Hunt racing, the Betfred Cheltenham Gold Cup.

"If you'd said at the start of the season he'd be second, third or even fourth favourite for the Gold Cup I'd have taken it with both hands," says Aspell, still taken aback by his mount's exponential rate of improvement.

"I've been pleasantly surprised how he's progressed. The Hennessy was his target, but he's gone forward from that. He jumps, he has proved he stays 3¼ miles, he's had a nice feel of Cheltenham over three miles [winning the Betbright Cup in January] and he has a lovely cruising speed. I'm hoping all that combined will put him thereabouts in the Gold Cup."

With maturity has come strength

ASPELL, who refuses to wear his heart on his sleeve, continues: "He's not slow. As big as he is [17.1hh], he was quick enough to win a bumper and the EBF Hurdle Final. His strength has caught up with that ability as he's matured. He's got very good form on soft and heavy and my only worry is that on good they might get him out of his comfort zone. If it's good to soft









Leighton Aspell (right) is 'pleasantly surprised' by Many Clouds' progression since winning the Hennessy

Wherever I go now I'm

'Leighton Aspell,

Grand National-

winning jockey',

which is not

bad for a

spare ride

introduced as

or softer, wonderful, but no one — not even us — would really want it bottomless."

Aspell, like his lighter brother Paddy, who has successfully switched from jumpers to the Flat, was born in Co. Kildare. Their father, who worked on a stud, did what all rural Irishmen did in those days and dabbled with a couple of horses kept in boxes rented off a farmer or at the end of the garden. But instead of producing a great racehorse, he came up trumps with two jockeys.

"I always took a healthy interest in what was going on at home," says Aspell, who also runs a pre-training business with his wife. "I had already had 10 rides by my 16th birthday. In

January 1993, I joined Reg Hollinshead and rode for him for a season on the Flat.

"But increasing weight meant that, in August 1994, I joined Josh Gifford. It was good fun, he was old school, we were well looked after. A lot of his old jockeys, like Declan and Eamon Murphy, Philip Hide and Peter Hobbs, were still riding — which dates me."

His first winner over jumps was for Richard Rowe on Karar at Huntingdon in May 1995, almost 20 years ago. Big wins did follow but not at their

current rate. He won a brace of Welsh Nationals with Supreme Glory in 2001 and L'Aventure in 2005, the same year that he won the Grade One champion four-year-old hurdle at Punchestown on United. But, eventually, disillusioned, he "retired" in July 2007 to become a pupil assistant to John Dunlop at Arundel.

A year and a half later — in a move which was as surprising as his retirement had been — he announced he would resume his career as a jockey having missed the camaraderie of the weighing room. That fellowship, of course, is what McCoy will miss as much as the adrenaline rush of driving one down to an open ditch.

And while racing does not always take kindly to those who do not appear to be totally clear in their own minds, it embraced Aspell on his return and he has not looked back in his second incarnation as a jockey.

What is more, one of the key men in encouraging his comeback was Oliver Sherwood, trainer of Many Clouds. If the combination were to win, it would be as popular a winner as you will get at this year's Festival.

"Oliver was very positive about me coming

back," he says. "I was very grateful for the help and it has continued to snowball. It would mean a lot to win it for him. During the same period he's had an injection of new owners and he's bought very well. You never lose your ability to train, you just go out of fashion if your owners don't reinvest."

Ironically, the only Aspell with a Cheltenham winner is Flat rider Paddy, who rode Chief Dan George to success in the 2010 Ultima Business Solutions Handicap Chase.

I'm riding better than ever

THE lack of success at jumping's premier fixture is not something that will keep Aspell awake in the nights leading up

to this year's meeting.

"I'm riding better than I was in my 20s," he explains. "These days jockeys are fitter, busier, we ride Sundays and in the summer. There's a lot more available to us, like nutrition and fitness advice, and I've been at it long enough to know what suits me diet and fitness-wise."

Aspell, whose other Cheltenham rides this week include his National winner Pineau De Re in the Pertemps Final today, Shanroe Santos in the Albert Bartlett and A Boy

Named Suzi in the Coral or County Hurdle.

He remains the only jockey with an official fan club, which was started as a tongue-incheek enterprise 14 years ago. His biggest fans, daughters Lucy, seven, Niamh, five, and Kitty, three, were all at Aintree for his biggest day.

"That was a great day," he reflects. "It's the most famous race in the world and wherever I go now I'm introduced as 'Leighton Aspell, Grand National-winning jockey', which is not bad for a spare ride.

"At the moment I'll ride Pineau De Re again, although Many Clouds is still in it and his owner, Trevor Hemmings, is very keen on the race. If he did end up going to Aintree obviously I'd have to ride him. Winning the Hennessy was very special, of course, because it was for Oliver; the Gold Cup would be the icing on the cake."

Aspell currently has no intention of following McCoy through the exit door. He is clearly enjoying himself so much he wants to delay that day for as long as possible.

"Make hay while the sun shines, I say," he adds. H&H

Ladbrokes World Hurdle



Thursday, 12 March, £300,000 (£170,850 first prize), 3m Winner in 2014: More Of That 6yo (Jonjo O'Neill) Barry Geraghty 15-2. Winning favourites: 14 in 42 runnings (final declarations were made Tuesday).

A very open race with up to a dozen horses having fine chances of victory — a far cry from the days when Inglis Drever then Big Buck's dominated the contest. The bookies will be rubbing their hands, but there will be a nice reward for those who find the winner. Paul Nicholls' pair Saphir Du Rheu and Zarkandar are on the shorter list, while Nicky Henderson has two hopes in Blue Fashion and Whisper. Reve De Sivola adds to a strong home contingent facing challenges from Ireland's Lieutenant Colonel, Briar Hill, Monksland and Jetson. But the winner may be lurking outside those

Abbyssial 5 ch g Beneficial — Mega D'Estruval (Garde Royale) (Trainer Willie Mullins, owner

Violet O'Leary)

HAS yet to attempt a



race of this distance and grew weary when asked to tackle nearly 2m4fin

France last summer. That was on heavy ground, which may have been a reasonable excuse. Clearly useful, but fell in last year's Triumph Hurdle and then recently at Gowran. The shorter County Hurdle seems more

Annie Power

7 ch m Shirocco — Anno Luce (Old Vic) 1112-1

(Willie Mullins, Mrs Susannah Ricci, jockey Ruby Walsh)
SECOND in this last



year (not helped by refusing to settle early in the contest), but

her main target was Tuesday's OLBG Mares' Hurdle. If lining up here she would have a big chance, as she is a class. act who has proven she can stay the trip and handle the track. Suffered a strain last year and had not run before the Festival

At Fishers Cross

7 b g Oscar — Fermoy Supreme (Supreme Leader) 11-4U232-3345 (Rebecca Curtis, JP McManus,

AP McCoy)

LOOKED a potential superstar in the 2012/13 season, but has raced nine times

since without winning. Some good efforts in defeat, including when third in this race 12 months ago before placing in Grade One hurdles at Aintree and Punchestown, but his jumping has been far from slick in his two most recent races.

Aubusson

6 bg Ballingarry — Katioucha (Mansonnien) 7113-2139

(Nick Williams, Jane Williams, Lizzie Kelly)
A rare spin for a



woman in a Grade One race over jumps, but Lizzie Kelly (whose

mother owns the horse) has ridden him in his seven British races to great effect Grade Three win at Haydock in November but two defeats since, including third to stablemate Reve De Sivola, temper enthusiasm in this.

Blue Fashion

6 bg Scorpion - Moon Glow (Solar One) 5141/42-2 (Nicky Henderson. John and Barbara Cotton)

DESCRIBED as "very delicate" by his trainer, a view underlined by just seven races in his

career, but clearly useful as he has shown in his two most recent outings: in one he was second to last year's World Hurdle winner More Of That at Haydock; in the other he chased home Faugheen at Ascot. Each-way chance.

Briar Hill

7 b g Shantou — Backaway (Bob Back) P111/111F-84F (Willie Mullins, Andrea and Graham Wylie)



BOUGHT for £100,000 after landing an Irish point-to-point as a four-year-old, but has

won that back and should go into profit soon. That pointing win gives hope that the trip will be no problem, and has a Grade One win on his CV, but two falls and two defeats in past year suggest this will be an uphill struggle.

Cole Harden

6 b g Westerner — Nosie Betty (Alphabatim) 1/1411272-1234 (Warren Greatrex, Jill and Robin Eynon, Gavin Sheehan)



A star for his relatively young trainer, cruising up to an official rating in the high 150s. Likely to have to break the

160-mark to win this, and three consecutive defeats do not lend optimism. No match for today's likely favourite, Saphir Du Rheu, in January, but not far behind Rock On Ruby in previous race. Better ground helps his chance.

Dedigout 9 b g Bob Back — Dainty Daisy (Buckskin) /211311/126412F/415-611 (AJ Martin,



rich vein of form lately with victories against

proven performers at Gowran and Navan. Has left it relatively late to try his luck in this contest (was a useful chaser for one season) and likely to find it tough going against specialist staying hurdlers.

Jetson

10 bg Oscar — La Noire (Phardante) /3214632/2765003154-122 (Jessica Harrington, Gerry and Moira McGrath)



NOT as good, or big, as half-brother Jezki (Champion Hurdle winner), but has belatedly progressed

from a handicapper to a topgrade performer. Was 20-1 when beating the great mare Ouevega at Punchestown last spring, but proved that was no fluke with two seconds (to Lieutenant Colonel) in Grade Ones since. One to consider.

Lieutenant Colonel

6 br g Kayf Tara — Agnese (Abou Zouz) 121261-3211 (Sandra Hughes, Gigginstown House Stud, Bryan Cooper)
MARCHING up



the ranks in style, and could provide fledgling trainer with a great conclusion

to her season, Sandra began her career in November after the death of her father, Dessie, and has won two Grade One races with this horse since (beat Jetson each time). Worrying he was only sixth at the 2014 Festival, but he's a year older

Monksland

8 bg Beneficial — Cush Jewel (Executive Perk) 01113/121/32 (Noel Meade, Patricia Hunt)



LIGHTLY raced, but in the hands of a master trainer for whom patience is not an issue, and the reward

has been two races of promise this season. Not beaten far by Dedigout and Lieutenant Colonel in those outings, and third in a Grade One at this meeting in 2012. Should be cherry ripe now and could regain the winning

Pont Alexandre 7 b g Dai Jin — Panzella (Kahyasi) 1113/

(Willie, Mrs Susannah Ricci)



EVEN horses owned by the Ricci family are beatable, although it seems to have been a seismic shock when

this one was turned over in a novices' hurdle at the Festival two years ago. Not seen in public since, and it is impossible to guess how he might cope with this test, but lots of class, and can hopefully get career back on track.

Reve De Sivola

10 b g Assessor — Eva De Chalamont (Iron Duke) /4753/21142/013148-75712 (Nick Williams, Paul Duffy Diamond Partnership.

Darvl Jacob)

GÁINING a bigger fan club each year as he is so consistent in top races, and his defeat of Zarkandar at Ascot

was top draw. But Cheltenham is not his favourite track, although he has won there and was only narrowly beaten at the venue by Saphir du Rheu in January.

Saphir Du Rheu

6 grg Al Namix — Dona Du Rheu (Dom Pasquini) 3310/541114-U1F1 (Paul Nicholls, The Stewart Family, Sam Twiston-Davies)



CARRIES the same colours as Big Buck's, the four-time winner of this race, and while unlikely to match that

feat he might land it at least once Trainer adamant there was more to come after a January victory over Reve De Sivola at this track (had been chasing earlier in the season), but well beaten at the Festival two years ago.

Seeyouatmidnight 7 b g Midnight Legend —

Morsky Baloo (Morpeth) P3F/11113-2 (Sandy Thomson, Mrs A



Thomson, Brian Hughes) FLAG bearer for his Scottish stable, which will be celebrating hard if he finishes in the top three. Ran

fine race (giving weight to the winner) when second at Haydock on season's debut (At Fishers Cross fifth), but needs to go up two gears to win this event. Stays the trip, and big enough price to tempt each-way investors.

Tiger Roll 5 bg Authorized — Swiss Roll (Entrepreneur) 121-71P643 (Gordon Elliott,

Gigginstown House Stud) UNBEATEN in two visits to Cheltenham. including when

successful in last year's JCB Triumph Hurdle, but his form otherwise

has been more tabby cat than tiger. Soft ground did not suit him in defeats by Kitten Rock and Hurricane Fly this season, and now has a much longer trip to tackle, but good ground will help.

Un Atout

7 b g Robin Des Champs Badrapette (Bad Conduct) 1/1141-54 (Willie Mullins,

Gigginstown House Stud) FOURTH of 12 in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle at this meeting last year (beaten 18

lengths) and won a Grade One at Punchestown's Festival, so this is in his sphere. But yet to race over the distance, and two defeats this season have been in chases. This test represents one very large canvas.

Un Temps Pour Tout

6 bg Robin Des Champs Rougedespoir (Bonnet Rouge) 333/11331321-33 (David Pipe, C Tisdall and B Drew, Tom Scudamore)



COST a small fortune (£450,000) at public auction in November 2013 following a very bright start in France.

Not the biggest shock if he claws a good chunk of that back here. lose third to Saphir Du Rheu at this track in January, but has done all his racing on soft ground and this is likely to be quicker.

Whisper

7 b g Astarabad — Belle Yepa (Mansonnien) 1/14141/331211-2 (Nicky Henderson, Walters Plant Hire)



IN great form this time last year, finishing second in the Welsh Champion Hurdle, landing the Coral Cup

at the Festival and then taking a Grade One hurdle at Aintree (At Fishers Cross second). A chasing career was back on hold after a recent second at Exeter, and must have a shout in this race

Zaidpour 9 b g Red Ransom — Zainta (Kahyasi) /251222P23/732162-561F732 (Willie Mullins, Mrs Susannah Ricci)



HAS been a model of consistency in his career, and scalped the future Grand National winner

Pineau De Re as a novice hurdler. Other Grade One wins have followed, but has yet to make an impression at the Festival and seems most unlikely to spring a surprise in today's race.

Zarkandar

8 b g Azamour — Zarkasha (Kahyasi) /15F/11141/222244-6312 (Paul Nicholls, Chris Giles and Potensis, Noel Fehily)



WILLpass £1min prize money if wins. Won a valuable Grade One hurdle at Auteuil in November, but in November, but

hasn't won in this country for a while. Only fourth in this last year, but invariably thereabouts. Recently second at Ascot, but probably needs everything in his favour to win race of this depth.



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Betfred Cheltenham Gold Cup

Carl Evans brings you the runners and riders for the World Hurdle and Gold Cup

3.20pm Friday, 13 March, £550,000-added (first prize £313,225) 3m21/2f

Winner in 2014: Lord Windermere 8yo (Jim Culloty) Davy Russell 20-1. Winning favourites: 28 in 86 runnings. (Final declarations were made Wednesday).

ANOTHER very open contest, missing a Kauto Star, but headed by his former stablemate, the dual King George VI Chase winner Silviniaco Conti, who attempts the race for a third time. Former winners Bobs Worth and Lord Windermere, plus habitual placer The Giant Bolster are back, while the eight-year-olds Holywell, Many Clouds, Road To Riches, Sam Winner and Smad Place have chances on their first attempt at the race, and Djakadam is interesting under Ruby Walsh. However, $the \, horse \, to \, bring \, the \, house \, down \, is \, Carling ford \, Lough, \, carrying \, the \, greatest \, - \, and \, definitely \, the \, toughest \, - \, jockey \, in \, his \, in \, the \, constant \, constant \, - \, constant \, constant \, constant \, - \, constant \, constant \, - \, const$ final Gold Cup ride.

CARL'S **THREE TO FOLLOW** Road To Riches Silviniaco Conti, Smad Place

Bobs Worth

10 b g Bob Back — Fashionista (King's Theatre) 21/1111/1321/11/615-8 (Trainer Nicky Henderson, owner Not Afraid Partnership,

jockey Barry Geraghty)

LOST unbeaten record
at Cheltenham (which included Gold Cup victory in 2013) when fifth last year, but only

four lengths behind winner Lord Windermere. Eighth of nine behind Road To Riches in his only race this season, but heavy ground would not have suited. Will be a force on good ground.

Boston Bob

10 bg Bob Back — Bavaway (Le Bavard) /1112/11FF/1661-13244 (Willie Mullins, Graham and Àndrea Wylie)



DUAL Grade One winner last spring, but a patchy Cheltenham record includes a sixth in the Rvanair Chase

12 months ago and second in the Albert Bartlett novices' hurdle in 2012. This season has finished behind Road To Riches and Carlingford Lough in Irish chases. They reoppose — how can he boss them?

Carlingford Lough 9 bg King's Theatre

- Baden (Furry Glen) /61133574PP/21221U6-151 (John Kiely, JP McManus, AP McCoy)

CARRIES a legendary



jockey on his final ride in this famous race you wouldn't want to miss it if he wins.

Every chance of pulling off the longed-for finale following a good comeback at Christmas and then victory at Leopardstown last month. Has his own way of jumping, but McCoy is the man for any idiosyncrasies.

Coneygree 8 b g Karinga Bay

(Executive Perk) 18/1113/111 (Mark Bradstock, Max Partnership, Nico de Boinville)



ONE of the season's fairy tales — the novice, bred by the late H&H racing correspondent and Injured Jockeys Fund founder Lord Oaksey, now

in contention for chasing's most prestigious prize. Has run in just three chases, but won them all from the front. Was a classy hurdler (third at the Festival last year), but this is a big test given his inexperience.

Djakadam 6 bg Saint Des Saints Rainbow Crest (Baryshnikov) 2/U1124/11F-81 (Willie Mullins, Mrs Susannah Ricci, Ruby Walsh)
YOUNGEST member



of the cast, and those who back him do so in hope over achievement.for

has nothing like the CV of some. But latest handicap chase win off top weight had a quality that begged to be noticed. Fell at last year's meeting, stamina doubts, no match for Many Clouds at Newbury — but oh, the potential.

Don Cossack

8 br g Sholokhov - Depeche Toi (Konigsstuhl) 5111/1F23/1212F2-41111 (Gordon Elliott, Gigginstown House Stud)



FAVOURITE for today's Ryanair Chase and thought very unlikely to run in this race unless Road To Riches, who is

in the same ownership, is suddenly sidelined. Grade One-winning chaser who should get the Gold Cup trip and would be a

Holywell 8 b g Gold Well — Hillcrest (Thatching) /2222124/32U1111-3U1



/222124/32UIIII-3UI
(Jonjo O'Neill, Gay Smith,
Richie McLernon)
THERE will be some
wincing if this horse
wins, for he would have
carried AP McCoy
had the great jockey

not been contracted to ride Carlingford Lough. Instead, Richie McLernon gets the chance, and the pair have won at the Festival for the past two years. Doddle round Kelso last month will have put him spot-on - must go close.

Home Farm

8 bg Presenting — Tynelucy (Good Thyne) 1/79/15P513/357P-1F7 (Henry de Bromhead, Chris Jones)



MODERATE form figures for race of this nature, and most unlikely to be involved in the finish tomorrow. His

dam was a half-sister to Jodami, winner of this race 22 years ago, but that's as close as he's likely to get. Could be an interesting contender for next month's Grand National

Houblon Des Obeaux 8 b g Panoramic — Harkosa

(Nikos) /9671046/11423274/ 1614396U-222 (Venetia Williams,



Mrs J Blackwell) SOUND, reliable horse who has taken his handicap rating past 160 this season

with three excellent seconds

— however, was behind Many Clouds and Coneygree on two occasions, and needs very deep ground to make a mark at this level (only ninth in race last year). Drainage means Cheltenham rarely does "deep" these days.

Lord Windermere

9 bg Oscar — Satellite Dancer (Satco) F11418/221231/8761-373 (Jim Culloty, Dr Ronan Lambe, Davy Russell)
SHOCK winner of



this race last year but shrewd minds will have remembered his RSA Chase win in 2013. So

he is two from two at the Festival, is proven at the trip and peaks in the spring, and while he has not won this season a lean run did not stop him 12 months ago. Not the most obvious winner, but could reward each-way backers

Many Clouds 8 br g Cloudings — Bobbing Back

(Bob Back) /21212P/1212B4-111 (Oliver Sherwood, Trevor Hemmings, Leighton Aspell)



WON Newbury's Hennessy Gold Cup in November, and a key trial for this at Cheltenham in January. Now up to

a rating of 165, but that is rarely enough for a win in this race. and has yet to try Grade One level. Needs to step up again, but young enough to do so and stays this trip. His jockey won last year's Grand National.

On His Own

11 bg Presenting - Shuil Na Mhuire (Roselier) /414P1/B1F/1F5/1766112-8626 (Willie Mullins, Andrea and Graham Wylie)



RAN a stormer to finish second in this last year. beaten a short head, but he entered that race off the back of two victories

and that's not the case this time. Good second to Road To Riches at Leopardstown's Christmas meeting, no match for Carlingford Lough at same venue since, and tendency to jump right is not a virtue at Cheltenham.

River Choice Carlingford 12 ch g River Mist – Noraca (Akarad) / P2434266/18181549F1-6F58P14

legendary jockey on his final ride in this famous race — vou wouldn't

want to miss itifhewins

Lough carriesa

(Richard Chotard, Fergus Wilson)
THIS French raider



is the bookmakers choice — a 250-1 shot who will be largely

ignored by punters and therefore make them rich in losing bets if successful. That won't happen, as he is not good enough, or sure to stay the trip. His latest win was in a claiming chase, far below this level.

Road To Riches

8 b g Gamut — Bellora (Over The River) F/111186/13P41-21211 (Noel Meade, Gigginstown House Stud, Bryan Cooper)

LANDED one of



Ireland's revered Galway Plate in July, and has been kept going since with

the Festival as a goal. The road to riches has included Grade One wins at Down Royal and Leopardstown — his rating is now into Gold Cup-winning territory. Might need a little improvement, but trip and ground look ideal.

Sam Winner

8 b g Okawango — Noche (Night Shift) /211446/FF/5103/3125P-113 (Paul Nicholls, A Yeoman, Sam Twiston-Davies)



FFLL in his first two chases (2011), but taken back to basics and has returned as a key player. Very good effort when third to Road To Riches in his first

attempt at a Grade One race, has won over a longer trip than this and will like good ground. Sam Twiston-Davies on a horse called Sam Winner might be an omen.

Silviniaco Conti

9 chg (Dom Alco — Gazelle Lulu (Altayan) /31241/111F3/3141-511 (Paul Nicholls, Potensis & C Giles, Noel Fehily)



THE highest-rated horse in the race, so he should win, but hard to forget how he jumped the last in front 12 months ago, yet

finished fourth. Cheekpieces seem to have added a new dimension recently, and most impressive in King George on Boxing Day. Fell in this two years ago, but his jumping since has been a joy to watch.

Smad Place

8 gr g Smadoun — Bienna Star (Village Star) /123U/3233/U112-52 (Alan King, Mrs Peter Andrews, Wayne Hutchinson)
A rating of 154 means



he needs to find plenty of improvement to win this. Close second in the RSA Chase

last year (usually a propitious sign if a horse runs well in that race). but Many Clouds has had his measure twice this season. At first glance, no, but on Cheltenham form, a possible.

The Giant Bolster

10 bg Black Sam Bellamy -/4U72142/3P247/7U5153-754 (David Bridgwater, Simon Hunt and Gary Lambton, Tom Scudamore)



A horse with a jumbled set of form figures, but one that includes a second, fourth and then third in this race.

He seems to save his best for Cheltenham, especially the Gold Cup. He must be factored in again, although beaten by Many Clouds and Smad Place in latest race.

Apologies to Oliver Townend for some confusion with his **Cheltenham tips** (5 March).

He says: "I'd like to point out that I didn't say that I thought Evan Williams would be the leading trainer at Cheltenham — I said Willie Mullins. Sorry Evan, but that was a misquote."



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OMETIMES I have to pinch myself when I am out hacking through the beech woods - I can't believe how lucky I am," says 51-year-old Tone Sarjanen, six years after her life dramatically shifted focus. "Life now is completely based around the horses," she says. "Before this, I'd never even

The career-minded IT consultant was living

had a pet.'

Life is too short': Tone nen has achieved more than she thought possible

in London when two consecutive diagnoses of serious illness ended up spurring her on to pursue her childhood dream to ride. She moved rapidly from riding school lessons to finding herself the unexpected owner of Ester, a fiveyear-old chestnut warmblood mare, in 2010.

"I had breast cancer and had surgery, which went really well. Then, a year later, I was diagnosed with epilepsy. I was offered the chance to have brain surgery, which fortunately also worked completely," she explains. "Afterwards, I started thinking: 'I need to do something. I work all hours, life is too short.'

"I remembered how I used to love horses when I was younger and so I started looking for a place to ride."

It was on a road trip to St Andrews where Norwegian-born Tone came across Edenside, a yard that would alter her trajectory.

"I was used to being put on a steady school pony but they brought me out a beautiful warmblood to ride. I loved it so much I started going back for the odd weekend. On one trip they said to me 'Tone, we have a horse you'd absolutely love'.

"I said 'that's nice but I'm not going to buy a horse, it's not going to happen.' Three days later we shook hands and she was mine.

Despite being a young horse, Ester proved a

perfect match and last year Tone fulfilled her ambition to compete in showjumping by the time she was 50.

We jumped British Showjumping (BS) on a ticket and have also competed in dressage, cross-country and at horse trials. I took it slowly, had no big ambitions and wanted to do it right," she says.

'We've been fortunate to have Natalie Western-Kaye at Snowball Farm as a trainer. It's important that you can find a yard where you can get a teacher you have a good relationship with."

Tone and her husband, who relocated from London to Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire, have become so enamoured with the equestrian life that they bought a second horse, 17.1hh gelding Faust, so they could both ride.

"It would've been nice to have started riding when I was younger," Tone muses. "But if I had done it then I might not have it now."

Escaping the pressures of work

LIKE many older riders, Susan Pearce first took up the sport as an escape from the pressures of work, and followed the traditional route of riding school lessons for several years before taking the plunge and buying her own horse.



She is now 14 years into her journey with "turbo cob" Cruella, who she bought as a green four-year-old at the age of 46.

"The first horse I bought, a seven-year-old Irish draught, really wasn't a match and I was totally over-horsed," she says. "He put me in hospital twice by bucking me off. He wasn't a naughty horse — he was just sensitive and upset by me being off-balance.

"After six weeks I sold him and I was really worried about going out and looking for the second one. I nearly didn't buy Ella as she was a youngster, but I took someone who videoed me and showed my instructor."

Susan and Ella have sampled most disciplines over the years and are now competing at unaffiliated elementary dressage and considering some affiliated outings on a ticket.

Susan admits that entering the horse world later in life has occasionally held them back.

"My instructor wanted me to buy a dressage saddle, but I wouldn't for ages as I was embarrassed at mine and my horse's ability. I thought we'd be seen as 'all the gear and no idea'," she says. "When you're competitive in your professional life, you can be a bit embarrassed about breaking into this new thing."



As well as developing a love for hunting, Barry Sexton (right) completed his first BE90 at the age of 61

'In at the deep end'

SOME older riders are more inclined to throw themselves straight in at the deep end and 44-year-old Sam Fewell is the first to confess that her and her partner Bruce Hill are "a bit mad".

The pair met on dating site Muddy Matches three years ago and now they hunt together weekly, having both separately taken up riding in their 40s.

"We don't do it with any particular style; I just think we have no sense!" she laughs.

It was when her eight-year-old son started having riding lessons at a private hunting yard four years ago that Sam found herself itching to get in the saddle. She quickly made the leap to loaning a 20-year-old hunter called Honey and within a few months was hunting.

"I was probably trying to run before I could walk," she confesses. "I'd hack out and exercise with the yard and say how much I wanted to join in. They'd say 'you'll get there'. Then one day they said 'come on, you can come'. I think I got Honey on 6 September and I was hunting her before the end of the season."

After Honey was retired, Sam bought a gelding called Doc Holiday two years ago.

"We've hunted every season since," she says. "Bruce now has a 20-year-old grey called Alfie and they are both fantastic and brave. They just carry us on.





43, Matt Were's life now revolves around horses

"If I was advising anyone who was thinking of taking up riding later on, I'd say 'fortune favours the brave'," she adds. "That's what Bruce and I say about starting our relationship, as well as the horses.'

A first BE90 at 61

FOR others, the lure of the chase has come even later in life. Barry Sexton started riding 13 years ago at the age of 49, but was a happy hacker until he recently joined his local riding club.

Last year, he jumped clear around his first BE90 at the age of 61 with 16-year-old gelding Piri Piri, and started hunting for the first time this season with the Braes of Derwent.

"It took me seven years of riding before I even

If I was advising anyone who was

up riding later on, I'd

say 'fortune favours

the brave'

on taking up riding in her 40s

Sam Fewell

thinking of taking

did any jumping," says Barry. "Four years ago, the most I'd done was a 55cm clear round. I didn't even have the confidence to ride Piri before – my wife had been riding him.

"We were persuaded to join Bishops Riding Club, we did some training sessions and then got a bit carried away,' he says. "There was

encouragement but no pressure and everybody supports you even if you don't do well."

Barry never believed he would find himself eventing but now plans to carry on competing at BE80 and BE90 this year.

"The hunting is also fantastic and my wife and I both regret not starting it earlier. We have a great time," he adds.

Those who are captivated by equestrianism's fringe disciplines can find themselves pursuing a stellar course of competitive success, despite being latecomers to the scene.

Driving trials national advanced single horse champion of the past two seasons, Matt Were, had never had contact with horses until an encounter in a pub five years ago at 43.

'Someone said to me that they were going out in the morning in their trap with their horse and I thought I'd go along, " he reveals. "Now it's my life. I don't go on holiday or watch football. Everything I do is horses."

A helping hand to return to the saddle

ADULTS looking to return to riding can take advantage of the British Equestrian Federation's (BEF) "Take Back The Reins" initiative. Launched in 2012, the programme is now hosted by 200 venues across the country.

"It's a seven week specialised course of coaching," explains director of participation at the BEF, Beth Maloney. "Sport England research showed us that there was latent demand for riding for women, particularly those who had ridden as a child but fallen out of the sport as they had progressed their careers and started families. They wanted a structured programme that built their confidence, improved their fitness, was enjoyable and enabled them to ride with others who were also returning to riding.

Reiki practitioner Jane Child has

recently been having lessons as part of the initiative at Talland with instructor Bryony Barraclough.

'Initially I felt like I was an eight-yearold again and I wasn't particularly confident," says Jane, who was motivated to return to riding after a 30-year break following a serious illness. "One of the key things is they're very good at assessing your ability before giving you a horse, so I was quite happy they'd look after me.

"We've been grooming, plaiting and tacking up, all of which I was rusty at. It's been nice having time with and getting to know the horse and I'm now aiming towards some dressage competitions."

Visit www.hoofride.co.uk/ takebackthereins

Within six months Matt imported his first horse, a Friesian stallion from Holland, before upgrading to coloured Friesian-Dutch warmblood stallion Da Vinci, with whom he had his first taste of success.

"He was properly up for it," said Matt, who trained with Di Hayes. "I think if I'd started with anything other than him I'd be dead though. I used to drive him in a pair with my mare and all sorts. I never knew you weren't supposed to."

While he faced a steep learning curve, Matt believes ignorance was sometimes bliss.

"I was a bit gung ho," he acknowledges. "But I think you've got to push your limits to know your limits. You'll never win a marathon unless

you're on the edge."

Derrick Mayes, chair of British Carriagedriving's (BC) chef d'equipe committee, took up the reins in his mid 50s, began competing at 60 and at 75 years old has now qualified for the national championships for the majority of the past 12 seasons.

The pairs driver acknowledges that driving trials offers opportunities other equestrian disciplines may not.

"Because it's a relatively small sport, we found if you could afford to do it, you were

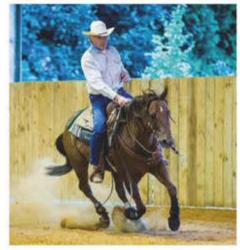
competitive and if you tried hard you could work your way up to a reasonable standard quickly," says Derrick, who competes along with his wife, tandem driver Sue. "There are more older people competing at a national level in their 50s, 60s and, dare I say it, 70s than any other sport I can think of."

Finding a niche

DAVID BRIMSON has discovered similar success in the world of western riding, despite never having sat on a horse until he was 56 years old. Two years later he had two British reining titles.

"My wife Pauline was a list three dressage judge and trainer when she was diagnosed with a serious heart problem and thought she'd have to give up," David explains. "I decided to try and keep her involved with horses by becoming involved myself."

His introduction to western came when he encountered a reining demo at a riding club



David Brimson thinks western riding is a great way for older riders to get back into the saddle

event. He knew instantly he'd found his niche and booked some lessons then and there.

"Soon afterwards I went to Colarado and bought a reiner. I joined British Reining and after a year I went into my first championship where I was both 'first year rookie' and 'rookie of the year'. I also qualified for the European Championships two years running, and that was within three years of starting on a horse."

So how does he explain his quick success?

"With my wife being an experienced horse woman, I was able to avoid some of the usual mistakes. We now run a successful western riding club and the biggest mistake you hear people saying is 'I'll get a youngster and we'll learn together'.

"We tell people to buy the most expensive, best-trained horse they can afford."

As with driving, David feels western is an ideal way in for older riders and those looking to return to the saddle.

"Find a trainer that has some school horses and put your trust in them," he advises. "It's very unlikely they'll have a horse you don't feel comfortable on because of the quarter horse's temperament, and the fact that they naturally feel comfortable. It's a big saddle with a horn you can hold on to if you have a bit of a wobble, so you're not going to go out the side door.

"Also," he acknowledges, "they tend to be smaller so you are closer to the ground." H&H



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Products New this spring

Get the scoop

H&H's products editor, Alice Collins, takes her pick of the hottest new launches at the 2015 British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) show at the NEC



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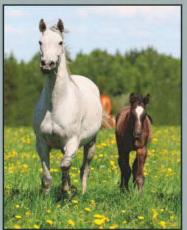






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COURSE CHAT

EACH year Isleham raises money for charity, having donated in the region of £160,000 to date. This year's cause was Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust, chosen for two reasons — Clem Tompsett MBE, the event president, spent over a month in . Addenbrooke's heart unit last year, while a member of the committee's child was also treated at the hospital. Proceeds will be split between the two units.

ALEX COLOUHOUN, chairman of the young rider selectors, was kept busy at the intermediate prizegiving, collecting no fewer than eight of the 30 rosettes up for grabs on behalf of riders already well on their way home.

ISLEHAM CAMBS 7-8 March

By Hilary Manners

NOT for the first time, Oliver Townend and Piggy French divided the open intermediate spoils at Isleham on the opening weekend of the season.

Piggy French rode the eye-catching Seapatrick Dark Cruise to the top of the table in open intermediate section O, the fastest pair of their class, coming home seven seconds over time.

"He's a big horse who prefers softer ground so the plan is to have a busy spring and quieter summer," she said. "I brought him in earlier this year than previously so he's very fit. He's even done a few days hunting, which has really sharpened him up. He's definitely stronger on the flat and finding things easier, which in turn means that I can ask for more."



'The best horse I've sat on': Laura Collett and Pamero 4 claim second in an Ol

It was Oliver's 13th successive attendance at Isleham, and his wins there are into double figures.

This year it was ODT Ghareeb. owned by Kathleen Wilkinson and Rachel Wood, who took the top spot in section N. He was the only horse to finish on his dressage score in an intermediate section.

and the only horse to make the optimum time. The pair finished bang on the 4min 46sec allowed.

The older he gets, the better he gets, although he can still be very spooky," said Oliver. "His work gets more and more consistent. I just need to remember to ride positively across country; it's not

WINN

that he doesn't want to do the job, but he can get distracted.

"Each time he's stepped up a level he has risen to the challenge most notably at Bramham CCI3* last year when he was clear inside the time across country. I think we'll go back this year and try to be more competitive [the pair finished 15th in 2014].

"I come to Isleham every year because Clem [Tompsett, organiser], his family and all the team do everything they can to make sure that riders and their horses have the best time. The ground, which has been good for years, gets better, and the organising team think of everything and do a great job."

Runner-up to both Oliver and Piggy was Laura Collett. Grand $Manoeuvre\,finished\,0.2\,of\,a$ penalty behind ODT Ghareeb, having posted the best dressage score of the section (23.2), to which the pair added 5.2 crosscountry time-penalties.

'He was a different horse today," Laura said. "We've built up a partnership over the winter and he trusts me now. Today was so exciting that I am going to have to put in my Badminton entry!"

Pamero 4 came closest to catching Seapatrick Dark Cruise, again following the best dressage score of the section. Laura describes the seven-year-old son of Perigueux as "probably the best horse I have ever sat on".

"He was awesome last year and I didn't think he could get better - but he has," she said.

Pamero was

buthehas

awesome last year

and I didn't think he

Laura Collett is excited by her Ol runner-up

could get better -

Collett cruises ahead

THE final section of the day provided Laura with a welldeserved win; she took the straight

intermediate section with a winning margin of over eight penalties.

She said: "Controe is an unbelievable showjumper; we won every time out over the winter.

'Having said that, he's a crosscountry machine too, so the fact that he doesn't always find dressage the easiest is forgivable."

While Izzy Taylor and KBIS Starchaser finished third behind Oliver, and Jonelle Price on her





Results

Results

ISLEHAM
OI sec N. 1, ODT Ghareeb (O Townend)
28.2,0,0=28.2; 2, Grand Manoeuvre (L Collett)
23.2,0,5=28.4; 3, KBIS Starchaser (I Taylor)
25.9,0,4.8=30.7, sec O. 1, Seapatrick Dark
Cruise (P French) 27.5,0.2.8=30.3; 2, Pamero
4 (L Collett 25,0,7.2=32.2; 3, Classic Moet
(J Price) 28.2,0.8.8=37. Int. 1, Controe (L
Collett) 28.6,0,7.2=35.8; 2, Marilli (I Wills)
23.8,13.2=44.2; 3, Coakham Clover (H Brise)
28.9,4,12=44.9, ON sec K. 1, Mr Bass (L
Collett) 28.8,0,0=28.8; Coromandel II (G
Tattersall) 27.3,0.6=33.3; 3, Pusiden (S Penn)
31.8,0,16=33.4, sec L. 1, Note Worthy (O
Townend) 26.5,0,0,4=26.9; 2, Bandmaster
(C March) 29,0,3,2=32.3; 3, Moylaw Badger
(K Barber) 28.3,0,56=33.9, nov sec L. 1,
Melford Solo (C Clover) 32.5,0,1,6=34.1;
3, Dukeofganymede (J Buchan)
31.5,0,4.8=36.3, sec J. 1, Shepherds
Watch (C Powell) 30.5,0,0=30.5; 2, Sinatra
Frank Baby (C Powell) 26.5,0,6=32.5; 3,
Collection (L Ollectiv) 23.2,3,0,10,14,23.3,0,4,263.3 Watch (C Powell) 30.5.0.0=30.5:2. Sinatra Frank Baby (C Powell) 26.5.0.6=32.5:3, Cooley Again (L Collett) 32.3.0.4=36.3. ONull. 1. Standlynch Accolade (F Collins) 27.8.0.6.8=34.6:2, Glenomra Hero (F Telfer) 32.5, 0.4=36.5;3, King Albert (C East) 29.8.0,7.2=37. BEIOO open sec C. 1. Hot Party Juice (N Dixon) 25.8.0.0=30.8;3, Dinky III (M Edmundson) 26.8.4.0=30.8. sec D. 1. Cavaliers Showdown (A Lames) Sec D. 1, Cavaliers Showdown (A James) 27.3,0,0=27.3; 2, Ottava Rima (A Hallows) 30,0,0=30; 3, Fedorian (S Jenman) 30,0,0=30; 3, Fedorian (S.Jenman) 30,5,0,0=30; **BE100 sec A.** 1, Clonea King (T Beskhmelnitskaya) 22.8,4,1,2=28; 2, Aubane Boy (P French) 30.8,0,0=30.8; 3, Castorre (T Gingell) 30,5,0,0.8=31.3. **scc B.** 1, Jump Jet III (P French) 20.5,0,0=20.5; 2, Fernhill First Friend (F Whittington) 20,0,5,6=25,6; 3. Shannondale Casey (H Norvill) 27,0,0=27. **BE90 open.** 1, Jack In The Box II (M Edmundson) 25,0,0=25; 2, Woodland Rook (S Grieve) 30,0,0=30: 2, Woodland Rock (S Grieve) 30,0,0=30; 3, Willie Gofar (O May) 32.5,0,0=32.5. **BE90 sec E.** 1, Jims Patch (J Anderson) 22.8,0,0=22.8; 2, Churchside Marble (J 22.8.0,0=22.8; 2, Churchside Marble (J Masterson) 28.3,0,0=28.3; 3, Riversdale Magic Heart (H Coy) 28.3,0,0=28.3. sec F. 1, Campion Capella (E Uden) 23.5,0,12=24.7; 2, The Jays Ghost in Cavalier (A Jacobs) 21.0,4.4=25.8; 3, Corrib Blue Vinney (G Dixon) 22.4,0.4=26.4. sec H. 1, Autumn Sky II (J Burgess) 31,0,0=31; 2, Boyne Valley Royal (J Bradshaw) 33.0,0=33; 3, Brisbane II (S Dipple) 33.5,0,0=33.5.

World Equestrian Games ride Classic Moet took third behind Piggy, it was Ian Wills and Harriet Brise who claimed the remaining podium places in the intermediate.

lan and Marli III, a reportedly "tricky" horse, led the dressage but two rails down showjumping lost them their advantage.

'Marli came to me as a fouryear-old for corrective schooling, but the owners didn't want him back," explained lan. "He's

adorable on the ground, totally trustworthy. but seriously keeps me on my toes when I'm riding him."

Harriet Brise was less than a point behind lan.

"Coakham Clover was diagnosed with

navicular last year which meant a lot of time out, but we know how to manage it now," said Harriet, who not only works full time as a housekeeper, but also runs a livery yard and prepares horses for hunting — a necessary task when



Harriet Brise finishes third in the intermediate aboard Cloakham Clover

your mother is master of the Old Surrey & Burstow.

As always at Isleham, ongoing improvements could be seen, most notably on the intermediate track, which featured a new double of skinny triple brushes on the latter part of the course. The water and the rail-ditch-rail remain the most influential fences, Flora Harris in particular

having some problems at both these questions.

Aside from the winners, two horses stood out as pure class: Catherine Witt's Kentucky-bound Easy Target, ridden by Francis Whittington, and Roger and Denise Lincoln's Redesigned, who looked to give Pippa Funnell a textbook, although steady, crosscountry round. H&H

How British and Irish riders have fared abroad

EVENTING

Doel takes the spoils



BRITAIN'S David Doel kicked off his season with a win in the CIC2*(26 February-1 March) on Jane James' and his own Miss Caruso.

He led from the front with a super dressage score of 31.2 (79.22%) and added just 2.8 time faults across country to cruise in 9.7 penalties ahead of his nearest rival.

'She didn't put a foot wrong," said David. "She didn't have the best of runs at the young rider Europeans at the end of last year [where Miss Caruso did not enjoy the very wet conditions], so it was nice to come somewhere with a decent track that was not too testing.

Miss Caruso was joint leader of the dressage in the following weekend's CCI2* (5-8 March), but tripped before a set of steps early on the cross-country, fell up the first step and was unable to make the second, so David retired. The class went to the other joint dressage leaders. Brazil's Ruy Fonseca and Tom Bombadill Too.

Fellow Brit Julia Dungworth added two more fifths at two-star level with Sonic Boom to her placings over the previous two weeks in Spain (report, 26 February).

David — who was one of H&H's under-25s to watch this season in the 26 February issue - finished second in the opening's weekend's CIC* on Eisfee, who belongs to Jane and her husband lan.

The eight-year-old was bought in September last year



Season's start: David Doel and Miss Caruso claim Barroca's CIC2*

through Francesca Pollara.

"She's not overly big for me, but she's a cracking little mover with a massive gallop. She actually got quite strong at the end of the cross-country, but she did the job and jumped a careful showjumping round too," said David, who was also seventh in this class on last year's Aldon young horse CIC* winner Mocklershill Buster.

Eisfee was in the money again the following weekend in the 60-starter CCI*, finishing 11th, while Mocklershill Buster was 17th. David also took eighth on Gillian Jonas' Ricoshea, who is returning from injury. Julia was 14th in this class on Lisa Wiles' Bonecastle Cavalier.

Roo Fox was the only British rider in the second weekend's small CIC3*, and finished fourth on her mother Alex and Diana Bown's Fleet Street.

Belgium's Karin Donckers scooped up wins and placings both weekends, with her successful rides including the Chilli Morning daughter Jalapeno, who belongs to the stallion's British owner Christopher Stone. H&H

Results

26 Feb-1 March: CIC2*.— 1, Miss Caruso (D Doel) GBR 31.2,2.8,0=34; 2, Debiut (R Prud Hon) FRA 43.3,0.4,0=43.7; 38.3,7.6,0=45.9; 5, Sonic Boom (J Dungworth) GBR 46.9,9.2,0=56.1 CIC* 1, Lady Brown (K Donckers) 44.8,0,0=44.8; 2, Eisfee (D Doel) 46,0,0=46; 3, Quartz De La Ferme (K Donckers) 47.6,0.4,0=48; 7, Mocklershill Buster (D Doel) 50.4,0.8,0=51.2. **4-8 March: CIC3*.**—1, Xaft (JD Silva) POR 45,0,4=49; 2, Lady Brown 35.2,6,16=57.2; 3, Makara De Montiege (R Scherer) FRA 47,10.4,4=61.4;

4, Fleet Street (R Fox) 51.3,6,5=62.3. CC12*. 1, Tom Bombadill Too (R Fonseca) 38,0,0=38; 2, Al Pan Pan (G Blasco Botin) ESP 39.8,0,0=39.8; 3, Tarastro (R Prud Hon) FRA 46.4,0,0=46.4; 5, Sonic Boom 45.2,3.2,0=48.4; 7, Chwupdiwup (B Cournane) IRL 45.5,0.4,4=49.9. **CCI*.** 1, Quartz De La Ferme 32,0,0=32; 2, Jalapeno 33.9,0,0=33.9; 3, Beat It B (G Boonzaaijer) NED 34.1,0,4=38.1; 8, Ricoshea (D Doel) 39,0,4=43; 11, Eisfee 43.4,0.4,4=47.8; 14, Bonecastle Cavalier (J Dungworth)

Mark Phillips

Comment Lookingfora compromise

HE start of a new season is here and already we have experienced sadness and are embroiled in controversy.

Francisco Seabra, who was killed in a fall in Spain last month, was a decent rider, having competed at the World Equestrian Games. Portables tipping over — as reportedly happened here is every designer and builder's nightmare. It's happened to me twice and I was lucky that no one was hurt.

I write from central Texas, so could not be at Heathrow for the FEI meeting with the International Event Riders Association and course-designers to discuss the new rule giving riders an automatic 21 penalties for breaking a frangible fence.

Riders are obviously worried that they could clip a rail with the back feet, break a device and lose big money or forfeit a medal. Many organisers and designers share their view.

Our fence judges are volunteers, but even for experts it's really difficult to tell if a pin has started to bend or a touch of tension has been lost from the reverse pin wire or rope.

The only way to guarantee fair play is to change a device every time it is hit. Obviously this is impractical — it would be expensive and timeconsuming as since time began horse have used their hindlegs on rails going into coffins, sunken roads, quarries and drop fences. It's part of the balancing process even when the fence is ridden well.

Such is the concern of organisers who want a result on the Sunday night and not an impending visit to the Court of Arbitration for Sport - that at Kentucky, Luhmühlen and Burghley it's been decided to replace frangible rails that might be broken by hindleg contact with old-fashioned logs or short-backed cabins. This is surely a retrograde step in trying to reduce the risk of serious injury.

The trouble is, I think the new rule is a good one with fences out in the

The only way to guarantee fair play is to change a device every time it is hit, but obviously this is impractical

open. We have had too many serious accidents where riders have not respected straightforward jumps enough. I'm not sure that the rule can differentiate between the two, but $hopefully\,by\,the\,time\,you\,read\,th is\,a$ compromise will have been reached.

Is this the future?

JUST over a month ago I was coursedesigner in an eventing showcase in Wellington, Florida. The organisers there could not get a date from the governing body, so decided to put up \$50,000 (£33,000) of prize money and run unaffiliated. It's a similar frustration many organisers have suffered in this country, although not a solution we've seen often.

We ran an advanced dressage test, Richard Jeffery designed a 1.25-1.30m showjumping course and I did a 2,000 m cross-country course with 20 jumping efforts at 535mpm, so a slower, shorter version of a regular CIC3*. Every part of every phase could be seen from the hospitality tent. The result was a huge success, enjoyed by spectators, sponsors and TV, as it was so easy to cover.

What if this was the future of the Olympic sport? What if teams were seeded like a tennis tournament, with a top and bottom half of the draw? Sixteen teams could be whittled down to four for a final medal showdown.

Countries could nominate teams of four, but in every round could only run three. Everyone would have to ride competitively to stay in the game. You could run a similar knockout contest and a second showjumping round for the individual medals.

The whole thing could be done in an area the size of a couple of polo pitches and with portables you could have a different course every week. The possibilities are endless.

There is no question that the sport has to change — nothing is forever, even if Badminton and Burghley survive in their existing form. Princess Haya has recently commissioned Charles Barnett, formerly the boss at Aintree and then Ascot racecourses, to look at new ideas for eventing and I hope he studies this one.

Riders and owners in the US are also pushing for a new rule that if an organiser puts up a certain prize fund they can choose their date, in an effort to raise prize money and break old-fashioned protectionist policies. You know this one is not going to be universally popular! H&H

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Massage Areas

A Moody monopol

MYERSCOUGH PREMIER LEAGUE, LANCS

4-8 March

By Jo Prestwich

THE first Premier League show of the 2015 season was a resounding triumph for team Moody with eight wins from three horses, plus a smattering of placings.

Normally Becky is the headliner and with six wins she would have deserved it — but this time it was elder sister Hannah who took centre stage. She won the grand prix and the freestyle with her own and Julie Lockey's Caluna.

"Not in my wildest dreams did l imagine a week like this," reflected Hannah. "The mare has been really on-side all week and it was great to get it together when it mattered. David Hunt, who trains us, has been inspiring. He challenges me but he's always believed in us. Although there has been a lot of sweat and tears along the way he has been proved right."

This was a first win at a Premier League in a long while for Hannah.

"I think [junior ride] Jordas was my last one and that must be at least 12 years ago," she said.

Jordas has his part to play in the Moody success story. Around 15 years ago, his owner Paulette Tuckey sold a Welsh cob to Julie Lockey and suggested she had a few lessons from the Moodys.

The Welsh cob Bramley's name lives on in Julie's Bramley Stud, and she owns outright and in partnership Carinsio, Caluna, Eaimbry Eleanora and a host of upcoming homebreds with the Penistone-based family.

"I could see straight away how good the Moodys were and I thought I could help them to achieve their dreams," said Julie. "We've had a lot of success and the horses are good, but then so are the riders."

The purchase of Carinsio, who won a prix st georges (PSG), inter I and PSG freestyle at Myerscough,

Deais amazing to ride but she's a chestnut mare and so am I, so we either click or don't

Joanna Thurman-Baker on her double junior winner



Hannah Moody spearheads the Moodys' domination of the show with grand prix and freestyle victories aboard Caluna

YOUNG MARES HOLD SWAY

"I was very impressed with her balance, elasticity, movement and ground cover - in fact I can't say enough about her," was judge Sandy Phillips' verdict on her five-year-old winner Fyona, ridden by Jess Dunn. "She is definitely worth taking to Verden for the young horse World Championships, and is very exciting for the future."

The Sorento x Ferro mare is owned jointly by Jess and the Keenan family, and was a chance discovery on a trip to Holland.

. 'We'd looked at a couple and were on our way back with time to kill so we did what you always do in that situation and consulted Google," said Jess. "We found this yard, rang them, called in, sat on the horse for 10

minutes and bought her. She is amazing to ride, I never want to get off her - she is heaven on earth!"

Hawtins Stud's Hawtins Duchessa (Decamerone x Don Frederico) won the four-year-olds with Bryony Goodwin in the saddle. The mare, whose half-sister Hawtins Sassi Neri finished third in the five-year-olds, was making her competition debut.

"I've only ridden her four or five times," said Bryony. "Imogen Moody has done all the hard work, I've just reaped the benefit."

The battle of the sexes was noticeable in the young horse classes — mares won both classes and in the final line-ups, outweighed the boys six out of seven in the five-year-olds and three out of six in the four-year-olds.





Left: Jess Dunn heads the five-year-olds on Fyona. Right: four-year-old Hawtins Duchessa wins under Bryony Goodwin

6 the number of wins Becky Moody clocked up across the show



Joanna Thurman-Baker posts a double junior win with the Daidalos mare Dea II

came after Julie saw his sire Painted Black at Olympia.

"I thought he was amazing and I wanted one by him," she said.
"Carinsio was bought unseen from Astrid Bolton. I'm a bit of a gambler and I trust her."

Becky's two other wins came with Dee Parker's Tirsa, who added a PSG and the inter I freestyle to the collection.

But for Becky, Hannah's win was just as important as her own.

"I was bricking it more when she went down the centre line than when I did, but her wins were the icing on the cake," she said.

Last year, tongue firmly in cheek, Becky's commentators' notes stated "world domination" under goals; this year a plus-80% score in a freestyle with Carinsio is a serious aim.

As it was, he crept ever closer to the mark that Becky is sure is there for the taking. The 78.58% they scored in the freestyle was 8% ahead of second place.

"Becky's was the only test that made full use of the arena," said judge Sandy Phillips. "The degree of difficulty came off and she did everything she should have done in a freestyle — what a partnership."

Junior dominationJOANNATHURMAN-BAKER

and individual tests with Dea II.

The Daidalos mare is certainly well travelled. As a youngster she did the Spanish Sunshine Tour with joint owner Carl Hester, and the following year moved to Florida with her other joint owner, American rider Katherine Bateson Chandler. Back in the UK she had a foal last year before being brought into work in October for Joanna to ride.

"She is amazing to ride but she's a chestnut mare and so am I, so we either click or don't," quipped Joanna.

Jess Gale won her first Premier League class outside under-21 ranks. She secured Friday's PSG with her European ride Umbro-S, bought from Damian Hallam three years ago after Jess decided showjumping wasn't for her.

"I'd jumped ponies up to newcomers but it was obvious I wasn't good enough," said Jess. "I thought dressage was going to be the easy option but it is getting progressively more difficult. I have to admit when we went to see Umbro-S it was more to go and ride a real schoolmaster, but I sat on him and it just clicked. I rode my first proper flying changes and we bought him."

Originally, 2015 was a year to feel their way up a level, but with the horse going so well Jess is aiming for the teams. Like



Classic Briolinca heads her first inter II under Gareth Hughes, after a year out

DOWN MEMORY LANE

PHOEBE PETERS made the long journey up from Hampshire to ride at Myerscough in the pony classes, specifically because it was the first show at which she rode her superstar SL Lucci when she got him four years ago.

Her 78.03% in the team test was the second highest of the show — not bad considering the combination have not been out since Bury Farm's High Profile show last November.

"I was thrilled he was so enthusiastic and excited to be back out," said Phoebe.

Judge at C, Jo Graham, also picked up on it. "Lucci was sharper and cheekier than I've seen him before," she said. "It showed there is even more to come. If Phoebe can harness that, she will take him up another level."

Perhaps the biggest grin belonged to Ruby Hughes, daughter of Gareth and Rebecca. Rebecca had tweeted that Ruby was hoping to meet Lucci at Myerscough, so Phoebe sent a message back for Ruby to bring her hat, and the lucky girl had a sit on the superstar of the pony world after he'd finished his test (pictured, above).



Joanna, she is now heading for Addington CDI.

Jess trains with Gareth Hughes, who won the inter II on Classic Briolinca (Trento B x Royal Dance), at her first show in 12 months.

"She won a PSG here last year but picked up an injury in the field soon after," said Gareth. "She only came back into work in November and I was over the moon with her—that was her first inter II. She's still green but has the ability to be top class. She'll be campaigned with Rio as the main aim."

Gareth, as ever, was full of praise for the Myerscough team.

It's a fantastic show," he said.
"The surfaces are great, the
organisation is awesome and the
prizes are worthy of a 'Premier'
show. It is well worth the journey
and I love the fact that you get so
many genuine dressage fans
wanting to watch every class." H&H

HEARD IN THE STANDS

OVERHEARD: "Do you think if I change my surname to Moody I'd stand a better chance?"

And also overheard on the Moodys' numerous successes: "I think they've won eight rugs in total — do you think they'll stick some of them on eBay when they get home?"

IT took just under 400 metres of tablecloth, nine fancy rosettes and an awful lot of staples to transform Myerscough's already amazing indoor arena into a showstopper.

Results

4 March: adv med 98Q (J Peberdy, H Bradley, F Scott). 1, Don Geniro (A Hua Tian) 67.94; 2, Silhouette (H Cheetham) 67.81; 3, Korenbloem Royal Rebel (L Flinn) 67.81; 3, Korenbloem Royal Rebel (L Flinn) 67.81; 7, Wiss World (L Garland) 67.37; 2, Zidaane (H Clowlel) 65.39; 3, Whispers (L Woodcock) 64.12, adv 102. 1, My Delilah (E Day) 67.01; 2, Contender (L Jarvis) 66.62; 3, Bolivi (J Sui) 65.64. 5 March: YDH 4yo Q (N Burton). 1, Hawtins Duchessa (B Goodwin) 8.4; 2, Grandeur (H Colwell) 8.12; 3, Woodcroft DE (A Brown) 8.24. PSG (J Peberdy, A Smith, P Hayler). 1, Carinsio (B Moody) 72.5; 2, Tirsa (B Moody) 69.96; 3, DJ (M Griffin) 66.74, inter I (S Cooper, N Burton, H Payne). 1, Carinsio 74.12; 2, Donnerouge (J Critchley) 66.62; 3, Cruise (L Faller) 66.32. 6 March: PSG sec A (A Tissot, N Burton, A Smith). 1, Umbro S (J Gale) 68.6; 2, Foold Uz (R Smith). 1, Umbro S (J Gale) 68.6; 2, Foold Uz (R Smith). 1, Sterro Hit (H Boswell) 68.03. sec B (J Ward, S Cooper, P Hayler). 1, Tirsa 71.27; 2, Zante (G Lucas) 67.54; 3, Vincente II (H Boswell) 65.96. inter I (A Tissot, J Graham, N Burton). 1, Carinsio 73.42; 2, DJ (M Griffin) 70.31; 3, Tirsa 69.74, u25 GP (J Ward, A Tissot, A Smith). 1, Charlex Eskebjerg (R Todd) 67.64; 2, Duela (P Hutton) 67.25; 3, Valentino (B Hayler) 6.24, Jirr Ind (J Graham, J Ward, S Phillips). 1, Dea II (J Thurman Baker) 69.78; 2, Florentino (R Hugh Smith)

66.27; 3, Zermat (J Thurman Baker) 63.82.
pony ind (J Graham, A Tissot, H Payne). 1,
SL Lucci (P Peters) 74.51; 2, Der Kleine Lord (G
Owen) 68.58; 3, Hagelkruis Valentijn (A Corrie
Dean) 66.79. 7 March: pony team (J Graham,
A Tissot, H Payne). 1, SL Lucci 78.03; 2,
Mister Snowman (L Kuropatwa) 72.31; 3, Der
Kleine Lord 68.21, jirr team (J Ward, P Hayler,
S Phillips). 1, Dea II 70.68; 2, Waverley (E
Williams) 67.48; 3, Florentino 65.81, inter II
(A Tissot, H Bradley, H Payne). 1, Classic
Briolinca (G Hughes) 69.96; 2, Caluna (H
Moody) 68.07; 3, Don Diablo (E Harris) 67.54,
YR team (J Ward, J Graham, J Ward). 1,
Don Archie (D Edwards) 68.64; 2, Ufano (B
Edwards) 68.64; 3, Foold Uz 67.02, PSG FSM
(S Phillips, H Bradley, H Payne). 1, Carinsio
78.58; 2, Don Archie (B Edwards) 70.11; 3,
Remarkable (S Bradshaw) 67.5, inter I FSM
(A Tissot, J Graham, J Ward). 1, Tirsa
74.71; 2, DJ (M Griffin) 74.72; 3, Ufano 71.33,
GP FSM. 1, Caluna 72.38; 2, WG Rubins Nite
(H Watson Greaves) 70.63; 3, Aldborough
Rubenhall (B Hayler) 68.5, 8 March: YbH
Syo Q (S Phillips). 1, Fyona (J Dunn) 8.78;
2, Classic Flamboyant (R Hughes) 7.92; 3,
Hawtins Sassi Neri (B Goodwin) 7, 46, GP
(A Tissot, J Graham, J Ward). 1, Caluna
68.3; 2, WG Rubins Nite 67.27; 3, Mr Hyde (S
Croxford) 67.03.



PATCHETTS WINTER REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, HERTS 28 February-3 March

By Helen Triggs

NATHALIE KAYAL took home three nationals tickets, including the coveted Magic prix st georges (PSG) freestyle championship.

Over the years she has had lots of second and third placings to qualify for the nationals and she overstepped her ambition of winning a regional championship by heading two.

Nathalie rode a fluent, expressive test on DHI Homerun in the PSG, which featured dramatic music from an album called The Chronicles.

"He has so much power in the arena," said Nathalie, who has owned the 10-year-old Hochadel x Flemmingh gelding for two years.

"I've not quite mastered it yet, but every couple of months he gains in confidence. I'm very excited to be going down the centre line on the gala evening at the nationals."

Nathalie rode DHI Bravo, a striking blue roan eight-year-old (Sydney x Goodtimes), to win the PDS Saddles elementary open freestyle and also qualify in the Equitop Myoplast elementary open class.



Quadruple qualification: Emma Woolley and six-year-old Special D stallion Eldorado are heading to four national classes at novice and elementary

"He did very well as a young horse and then had a lot of time off with niggling injuries," said Nathalie. "He's over 17hh and it has taken time to be able to contain the power and not make too many mistakes.'

The Buckinghamshire-based rider has a string of top quality horses, mostly sourced from DHI Performance Horses

Another of Nathalie's, Woodcroft St Emillion (by San Moritz), was piloted by freelance rider Richard Hayward (see box, top right) to head the Bailey's Horse Feeds novice open freestyle championship. The pair's score

was the highest of the day, close to the magical 80%.

"Nathalie put together a programme using Pirates of the Caribbean music, and the judges seem to love it," said Richard. "He's one of the nicest horses I've had to ride, and he gave me 110%."

Four tickets to ride

EMMAWOOLLEY had a fantastic show, qualifying her sister Jessica's stallion Eldorado for all four classes entered at novice and elementary level.

The dark bay six-year-old is by Special D and has been ridden by Emma since he was three.

Iwasn't surprised he was full of himself, but I had to keep changing the floorplanaswe wentalong

Sadie Smith improvises with the fresh stallion Spiridon, to head the medium restricted freestyle

"He felt very secure [in his tests] and really quite easy, so I could ride for all the marks it was possible to get," said Emma, who trains with Hannah Esberger.

"He's a happy soul who just loves life."

2015 will be Eldorado's first breeding season, available by artificial insemination (AI).

Another impressive stallion danced and pranced his way to victory in the shape of Sarah Tyler-Evans' black beauty Spiridon, ridden by Sadie Smith.

Their road to winning the Spillers medium restricted freestyle championship was not straightforward, as the eight-yearold Sandro Hit stallion had a bite on his withers in early February, which meant that he could not be ridden until just before the show.

He was a bit fresh, and threw in a few extra moves during his test.

the number of months since Tig Abel's novice horse Rococo had colic surgery



New partnership Kate Cowell and Dahling claim a medium freestyle with 76.11%



The fresh Spiridon (by Sando Hit) lands a medium music ticket with Sadie Smith

"He's hardly done anything other than qualify in the last six months, so I wasn't surprised he was full of himself." said Sadie. "I had to keep changing the floorplan as we went along."

They performed to dramatic Hans Zimmer film music, which suited the stallion's powerful movement.

Stand-by jockey

KATE COWELL was riding two horses, Dahling and Corchapin, who had come to her only three weeks before the show, after their usual rider Jo Hamilton's serious riding accident (news, p5).

Jo qualified Dahling at medium



Sirius Black III garners nines for walk and half-pass under Sonia Baines

open freestyle and Corchapin at advanced medium open.

The Lingh mare Dahling, owned by Olwen Lloyd, was nearly 4% clear of the field and, despite the newness of the pairing, they really looked to have gelled.

'It's such an honour to have Jo's horses while she is injured," said Kate. "They are beautifully trained and Jo did all the hard work qualifying them for the regionals. We both train with Carl Hester, so possibly we have similar riding styles.

Kate picked up a wild card for her second place on Corchapin to Julie Hugo-Ross and Alivia II in the Nupafeed advanced medium freestyle.

Julie owns the 10-year-old Olivi mare with Frances White and rode to flute music, which suited the elegant mare very well and earned them a score of 76%.

'The music has such a lift and it works really well in the changes and extended canter," said Julie. "I hadn't intended to bring her, but my other horse qualified at inter I so I put in an entry. She's a lovely mare with an amazing canter.

"At the beginning she was very difficult, but now she's settled and

HEARD IN THE STANDS

DONNA MUIR, winner of the novice restricted freestyle with Cloughavoula Blaze. has her own musician to create her programme in the form of her husband, Nick.

However, she says, she tends to change her mind and Nick has said "never again". Maybe he'll change his mind after her success?

"IT is much more nerveracking being an owner than riding the tests," said Nathalie Kayal, who has given over the reins on one of her horses to Richard Havward.

"We'd met at Carl Hester's and I saw him having a difficult ride at last year's winter championships and liked how he handled the situation," she said.

THE rider's worst nightmare?The soundtrack starts and it's the wrong music.

Daisy Coakley found herself creating a floorplan on the hoof in her medium freestyle as her horse's owner. Judy Firmston-Williams, had handed in her advanced medium music. She still managed 10th place.

ALICE BEGG'S first place on Gluckauf and third place on Biggles Tosha in one of the prelim sections were advance presents for her 17th birthday two days later.

is working at grand prix at home."

Daisy Coakley won the other advanced medium freestyle section on Judy Firmston-Williams' Cleopatra II. The mare also qualified for the advanced medium restricted class, as did Daisy's own horse, Urbanus VI.

He will have an unusual preparation for the dressage championships, as he will event at Gatcombe Horse Trials in the weeks before.

A frosty preparation SIRIUS BLACK III claimed the advanced medium open championship with Sonia Baines. He was previously ridden by Peter Storr, and was bought by Alison Singleton in October last year.

"We had a fortnight to prepare for today as our arena has been frozen for two months," said Sonia. "I made some mistakes and he broke twice in the canter, but he

got nines for his extended walk and half-passes.

Amateur rider Claire [Tig] Abel qualified two for Hartpury. Rococo took a second place in the Blue Chip novice open, and Rowan Magic (Roo) won the advanced medium restricted.

Roo is a large horse with a big canter.

"I was pleased with his canter serpentine as it can be quite difficult to get him organised, balanced and in the right place in the changes," said Claire.

Rowan Magic has been to Hartpury every year that Claire has had him. In 2013 he fractured a tooth in his upper jaw which had to be removed through the side of his face, leaving a hole in his sinus.

He has been back in work for a year, but suffers periodic infections and the opposite tooth in his lower jaw requires regular attention as it grows a spur. H&H

KBIS prelim 17 sec A (A Scott, J Head, M Terry). 1, Gluckauf (A Begg) 72.18; 2, Dr Jonathan (B Franklin) 69.42; 3, Biggles Tosha (A Begg) 69.29. sec B (J Firmston-Williams, M Ruddock, K Ratcliffe). 1, BKS Brandini (C Bennett) 74.81; Shakira III (C Freed) 71.09; Paolo Bennett (1/4.8.; Shakira III (C Freed) / 10.9; Paolo De Rosa (J Burgess) 70.71. Blue Chip nov 39 sec A (J Rooney, P Bushell, E Mackie). 1, Eldorado (E Woolley) 70.74; 2, Sympatica (M Schleicher) 69.66; 3, Breezer (S Nelson) 69.08. sec B (J Head, K Ratcliffe, A Nicell). 1, San Diego V (J Thompson) 71.44; 2, Rococo (C Abel) 71.09; 3, Herman (S Thorndale) 70.29. rest (K Pathors (Ed. A Nicell). 1, Belicipina 7.1.09; 3, Herman (S Thorndale) 70.29; rest (K Barker, C Porterfield, A Nicell). 1, Belissima (C Sweeney) 71.26; 2, Sarindar (S Jones) 70.63; 3, D Alies Dance (T Hewlett) 69.37. Equitop Myoplast elem 59 (C Ballantyne, L Whestsone M Robley). 1, Eldorado 73.49; 2, DHI Bravo (N Kayal) 73.18; 3, San Diego V 71.88. rest (J Head, J McGarel-Groves, K Barker). 1, Aktie D (L Field) 70.99; 2, Whitewood Starburst (R Slough) 70.52; 3, Keystone Washington (J Beckwith) 70.31. Albion med 75 (S Andrews, W Filtness, J Robinson). 1, Don Dante (O Cooper) 71.44; 2. Arrow (E Johnson) 67.79; 3, Rembrandt DDH (C Hole) 67.75. rest (C Ballantyne, L Whetstone, A Scott). 1, Crack The Code (J Turney) 67.57; 2, Penhaligon Rockstein (C Smith) 66.53; 3, Shannondale Classic (G Hall) 66.49. Charles Owen adv med (M Robley, A Darken, S Andrew). 1, Sirius Black III (S Baines) 71.75; 2,

Brasil P (J Ward) 70.22; 3, Corchapin (K Cowell) 70.22, rest (J Head, J Robinson, L Wall). 1, Rowan Magic (C Abel) 69.69; 2, Cleopatra II (D Coakley) 69.43; 3, Urbanus VI (D Coakley) 67.24. Bailey's Horse Feeds nov FSM (N Herbert, J Wood, W Filtness). 1, Woodcroft St Emillion (R Hayward) 79.35; 2, Eldorado 77.22; 3, Bocelli (T Reeve Smith) 76.67, rest (K Mepham, J McGarel-Groves, J Gillett). 1, Cloughavoula Blaze (D Muir) 74.83; 2, Killy Prince (S Hall) 73.24; 3, Catrnint (M Baseley) 71.2. PDS addles elem FSM (A Hessay, L Jenklins, J Wood). 1, DHI Bravo 74.1; 2, Dior UKH (J Rudd) 73.783, Eldorado 73.65, rest (P Bushell, M Robins, D Wardle). 1, Balimmore Blue Max (K Ward) 73.4; 2, Ben III (L Walkling) 72.3, Serious Black (J Kent) 72.12. Spillers med FSM (L Wall, A Darken, 2. Berlin (C. Wailing) 7.2. S. Serious Black (J. Kerli) 72.12. Spillers med FSM (L. Wall, A. Darken, S. Pidgley). 1, Dahling (K. Cowell) 76.11; 2, Spellbound Tobias (P. Hayler) 72.28; 3, Candover Dramatico (N. Gregory) 72.5. rest (K. Fox, G. Leverett, A. Hessay). 1, Spiridon (S. Smith) 72.83; 2, Aramis I. (R. Kingswood) 70; 3, Urban (S. Smith) 72.83; 2, Aramis (R. Kingswood) 72.83; 2, Ar 72.83; 2, Aramis I (R Kingswood) 70; 3, Urban Knight (J Littlejohn) 68.94. Nupafeed adv med FSM sec A (K Fox, E Mackie, J Burtwell). 1, Cleopatra II 74.17; 2, Hochadel's Black Pearl (A Hardwick) 73.9; 3, Rowan Magic 73.28. sec B (W Filtness, M Ruddock, D Wardle). 1, Alivia II (J Hugo Ross) 76; 2, Corchapin 73.61; 3, Ufano I (R Edwards) 73.39. Magic PSG FSM. 1, DHI Homerun (N Kayal) 74.96; 2, Ufano I 73.08; 3. Special (T Reeve Smith) 72.29.

Dressage HIGHLIGHTS The latest competition news in your area



NORTH-WEST

By Jo Prestwich
SONYA HALL put the
disappointment of the big "E" at
the winter regionals behind her
— where she was eliminated for
carrying a whip. At **Beaver Hall**EC, Staffs (28 February), she won
both the advanced medium
qualifier and advanced 102 on

The strikingly marked sevenyear-old (Edgevale Kolor Kode x Fleetwater Opposition) was bought as a just-backed four-yearold from Liz Jackson.

Olympus Kaleidascope.

"I was looking for something a bit smaller," said Sonya, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis five years ago. "Ideally I was looking for something with a little bit of experience, but Liz persuaded me to come to try her and once I got on, I didn't



NORTH-WEST Sharron Glynn is one of two winners aboard Evorno, at novice

want to get off.

She's not what I normally buy but she is fab — a really smart, intelligent little horse."

Sharron Glynn and Sara Lawton each won a class on Evorno at

Arley Moss EC, Cheshire (27 February). Sharron topped the novice and Sara the prelim. It was

novice and Sara the prelim. It was a first outing since last autumn for the Westenwind x Ferro gelding and a first competition outing for Sara on him.

"It's too cold for competing through the winter," quipped Sharron, who is aiming to qualify for Area Festivals at novice this year.

Gemma Abram and her homebred Fanta Rose won the prelim and novice qualifiers at **Tushingham Arena**, Cheshire (1 March). The five-year-old is by Santana out of the Friesian/warmblood mare Debonnaire, who was competed to advanced level by Steph Croxford.

"It was only her second show and she was amazing," said Gemma, who trains with Tracy Tomlinson.

SOUTH-WEST

By Annabel Kerby

STEPHEN WAY and the former advanced event horse Secret Picnic dominated the novice 34 open qualifier at **West Wilts EC** (26 February) earning 77.9% before also heading the elementary 50 open qualifier.

"She broke down three years ago and has since bred a foal, so she owes us nothing, said Salisbury-based Stephen, who rides the 19-year-old for Helen Macri and Kate Hort. "But we are both having fun and to qualify for the nationals would be a dream."

Sonya Fitch-Peyton claimed both a novice open and the prelim qualifier open section on the Connemara five-year-olds Corrigeenroe Conor and Ballyconneely Rebel respectively, both of whom she bought from

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SOUTH-WEST Former eventer Secret Picnic amd Stephen Way take two wins

SOUTH-EAST Hard work with Armageddon pays off for Zoe Griffiths at prelim

the Clifton Sales in Ireland.

"I bought four ponies unbroken two years ago to produce, and have since been back to buy two more, said Sonya, who is trained by Cara Hayward and works as a yard manager for Tim Billington.

"This time I tried to buy bay ones as I've got fed up of washing the greys all the time.

"They can be a bit wild at first, but they all have such fantastic temperaments that they are fun to bring on. I'm hoping to keep Corrigeenroe Conor as a flagship pony for the yard as he is exceptional on the flat."

Equine physical therapist Rachel Howe, from Street, headed both the elementary restricted qualifier and the medium 61 restricted class at **Bicton College**, Devon (1 March), on her sevenyear-old roan, Top Of The Pops. A level student Emily Hedger won the prix st georges (PSG) with 71.97% at **Vale View**, Leics (1 March), aboard 19-year-old

schoolmaster O'Donner. She has owned the horse for three years and is on the junior riders promising squad.

"He's been a great schoolmaster," said Emily of the gelding by Donnerschlag. "I used to ride a skewbald cob, so it was a bit of a jump."

Police officer Claire Marston and six-year-old Showgirl took

both elementaries at **Swallowfield EC**, Warks (1 March).

"I dragged her out of the field

that afternoon, washed her and off we went," said Claire, who has owned the mare by Showmaker since she was a yearling.

"She's quite easy and fits in with my busy family life."

Also at Swallowfield,

Laura Wollen scored the highest percentage of the day — 78.79% — when winning novice 22 with Julie Steed's five-year-old Woodcroft Francisco, by Fidertanz. They also won novice 38 with 76.45%.

"He's a horse we want to preserve for the future," said Laura. "We call him Saint Frank because he's so easy."

SOUTH-EAST

By Celia Cadwallader
NEWLY affiliated Zoe Griffiths and
the 10-year-old Armageddon
(Heartbreaker x Concorde)
followed a plus-68% prelim debut
at Stilebridge (20 February), with
double prelim wins on 74.8% and
75.65% at Saddlesdane, Kent

(1March).
"I bought 'Doolie' 18 months ago and started from scratch," said Zoe. "His front end was in one county and the back in another. He had no idea of working in an outline.

"His papers suggest he was bred to jump but he mostly seems to have been hacked. Frances Wilson, my trainer, introduced herself to me at an unaffiliated show, and said how talented he was. She's boosted my confidence and got him going in such a super way."

Pictures by Jo Prestwich, Celia Cadwallader, www.kevinsparrow.co.uk and www.andrewdesmond.co.uk

Ex-racehorse Mumtaz Begum took both elementaries under Clare Bull, on only Clare's second time on board the horse. The thoroughbred will be adding yet another dimension to her versatility this year (see box, p40).

CENTRAL

By Stephanie Bateman EVENTER Laurence Hunt kicked off his 2015 campaign in style with a double novice win at **Witham Villa**, Leics (23 February) riding six-year-old Darco.

"He has evented, but we thought we'd do dressage instead because he moves so nicely," said Laurence of the gelding by Numero Uno. "He's got lots of presence and a fantastic temperament and, but I've never competed above medium, so if he goes higher, I might be stuffed!"



Idragged Showgirl

out of the field that

afternoon, washed

her and off we went

busy family life

on her double elementary winner

Claire Marston

— she fits in with my

CENTRAL Emily Hedger tops a PSG with Donnerschlag schoolmaster O'Donner

Some of the key benefits of the new apple flavoured liquid formulations include...

- ☑ Joint, Cartilage & Bone Health
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- Muscle recovery & Antioxidant benefits





12 MARCH 2015 • HORSE & HOUND 41

Dressage highlights

THOROUGHBRED VERSATILITY

"YOU can't train temperament, but I can train the rest," says Mumtaz Begum's owner Virginia Rider, talking of the fourth former racehorse she has produced primarily for the showring. The Kyllachysired mare (pictured, right) won at elementary this week ridden by Clare Bull (see South-East report, p39).

Virginia has owned the 10-year-old since shortly after she left racing at eight. She explained: "I like to produce them from nothing to something, then start again. I've broken vertebrae three times in falls.

"I don't buy anything at all spooky. I do

the hacking and project manage my 'Team Tuscan' horses' training and show careers.

"In dressage we've taken 'Ninja' from walk and trot to victory at elementary with Tania Dahdi and Clare. Last year, Sara Haddow, her show rider, had county wins in Racehorse to Riding Horse classes and they finished eighth in the large riding horse class at the Royal International.

"With Claire Carter, her jumping rider, she also competed in the autumn Milton Keynes three-day event.

"We're now training with Claire Lewis with a view to showing her under sidesaddle."



Despite disappointment at the Merrist Wood regionals when nerves affected Woodcroft Schwarzdramont, he and Jaime Edwards were back on track at **Pachesham**, Surrey

(28 February). They followed a 71.25% overall win in the elementary 59 with a first win at medium on 65.68%.

"I've hardly ridden a medium in 10 years, so I was rusty," said Jaime. "There's a lot more to come."

Jen Sadler's seven-year-old

Rubican (by Keystone Rhondeo), won elementary 40 with 70.97% under Rosie Andrews at **Step Aside**, West Sussex (25 February).

"He's a joy to ride, and after a winter spent training he's come out a much more mature horse," said Rosie

WALES & WEST

By Andrea Oakes

SOPHIE COX and Empire Of The Sun topped the leaderboard in a high-scoring day at **Burrows** **Court Farm**, Glos (25 February). They headed the open novice 28 with 77.08%.

The six-year-old Spielberg gelding overcame his travelling phobia to make a successful start to his affiliated career last autumn.

"He would dig the floor and have a complete meltdown, but he can cope with the journey now," said Sophie, who spent time loading him on and off the lorry and going out for short trips. "It was a slow process but worth it.

"I like his movement and personality," added Sophie, who trains with Jo Graham and Islay Auty. "He's really trainable and wants to learn."

Holme Park Flaunt scored a 75% prelim 14 qualifier win and took the restricted novice 28, surprising his owner Alexandra Stanley in the process.

"He's normally quite tense and spooky, so I just don't know what made him go so well," said Alexandra, who has owned "Freddie", a 15.2hh chestnut gelding, for six years. "We even got a nine for our centre line — I'm not sure how, as we can't

even walk in a straight line!"

Trainer Catherine Porter has been helping Alexandra deal with Freddie's spookiness.

"Catherine suggested I keep him busy with quick transitions so that he's listening to me," said Alexandra, who works as a receptionist in a hair salon. "I haven't competed Freddie since last September because I changed jobs and was too busy with work, but he has definitely come back on form."

SCOTLAND

By Melanie Scott

TIME concentrating on training paid off for Layna Martin at

Muirmill EC, Ayrshire (15 February). She achieved the day's highest score — 74.79% to lead a qualifying novice class with Milo II.

"We've not been out competing since October," said Layna. "We've been having monthly flatwork lessons with David Gatherer and there's been a big difference in Milo. He's lengthened his neck, taken the contact down, and relaxed."



Bright future for 'little showman' Dafira

DAFIRA is proving an exciting new prospect in the hands of Carl Hester's protégée Amy Woodhead.

Sue and Rob Fearis' Lord Leatherdale gelding (pictured, above) headed the novice 38 qualifier with 78.39% on his first outing last month, at Hartpury College. He then won the novice and elementary qualifiers at **Burrows Court Farm**, Glos (25 February), notching up scores of well over 70%.

"He's a real little showman," said Amy, who has been riding 16hh "Daffy" under Carl's guidance for six months. "He's not fazed by competition and is exactly the same in the arena as in the warm-up. He competed outside for the first time at Burrows Court and definitely rose to the occasion."

Daffy's Guernsey-based owners bought him from Carl as a three-year-old and were at Burrows Court to see him compete for the first time.

"Carl did tell me that if Daffy had been a hand bigger I would never have had a look-in," laughed Sue. "He takes the eye and Amy is a lovely, calm rider — they suit each other."



SCOTLAND Gastador LXII claims his first novice points under Victoria Gladwyn

Layna has owned the 10-yearold part-thoroughbred gelding for six years, and competes at British Eventing (BE)100.

"I plan to move up to BE novice and also try elementary shortly," said Layna. "I was so pleased with his score, he just went in relaxed and strutted his stuff."

BHSI Iain Couttie collected three wins. He won two elementaries at plus-70% with his daughter Rebecca's Chellano Z 13-year-old Che. He also deputised for Lesley Storrie to win a novice with Gallantino VD Kempenhoeve, a nine-year-old by Pavarotti Van De Helle.

At Fountain EC, Aberdeenshire (28 February) Victoria Gladwyn rode Andalusian PRE gelding Gastador LXII to collect his first novice points.

Gastador, an eight-year-old by Urgente XII, is owned by Wendy Wallace.

"I've had the privilege of taking on the ride this year," said Victoria. "Having only ridden him for a couple of months this was our first event.

'He's a fabulous character and is proving to be very trainable. He was a little insecure in his way of going and had a few green moments, but showed a lot of promise for the future."

EAST

By Selene Scarsi AT Forest Edge Arena, Norfolk (25 February), Maggie Davies posted impressive novice wins -75.92% and 74.65% — on Nataniel Nutmeg.

The homebred 16.1hh is by the 14.2hh Connemara stallion Fenrose Bonny Blue out of the thoroughbred Broughton Lady. The wins were particularly poignant as Maggie lost Bonny Blue just before Christmas, when



EAST Kari Nashand, who joined British Dressage only last March, posts 72.9% at novice riding her own Gerdi's Delight

he was only 12 years old.

"All his youngstock are doing really well, and 'Nut' is no exception," said Maggie. "They all move well, like their sire and dam. The tests at Forest Edge went smoothly and Nut was paying attention. He jumps as well, and he hunted a few times last year. Like most Connemara crosses, he is quite versatile.

The only plus-70% score at Fenning Farm, Cambs (28 February), went to Kari Nash and Gerda's Delight, who posted 72.9% at novice. Gerda's Delight is a 15-year-old 15.2hh part-bred Irish draught mare, whom Kari has had for four years.

We came to BD only last March, after starting lessons with Anne Ratcliffe," said Kari, who did "mostly jumping and crosscountry" before joining BD.

'Anne really encouraged me to

go for it, even though my horse's conformation is not ideal for dressage.

"I'm really proud of 'Blue' as we managed to qualify for the 2014 summer regionals and this year's winters. This was the first time I have done that particular test and it was extremely windy."

NORTH

By Jo Prestwich

KATE JACKSON and her Welsh/ Cleveland Bay mare Pembridge Dym Sharydd topped both novices at Epworth EC, Lincs (1 March). The daughter of Pembridge Midshipman was bought through word of mouth and over the phone.

"I was looking for something a bit bigger and it was suggested I went to Pembridge Stud," Kate said. "I saw a photo of her and fell in love with the image she presented. I still can't believe I bought her over the phone!"

Kate trains with Tracy Rivett and gets home to ride once a month from university, where she is studying for a degree in

I saw a photo of Pembridge Dym Sharydd and fell in love with the image. Istill can't believe I bought her over the phone

English language and linguistics. Luckily my mum, Jane, rides and schools her for me in between," she said.

Chris McGrann rode Moonshine II, the last of his homebreds, to win the novice 28 at **Richmond EC**, North Yorks (28 February). The nine-year-old is by the Irish draught stallion Touch Of The Blues, who was exported to America, out of Chris' CCI* mare Starlight Express.

"He's the ultimate pleasure horse," said Chris, who is planning to let a junior rider event the horse this season. "He's won Irish draught classes in the showring, alongside jumping, and if time allows I will try and qualify him for the regionals — although it was enough of a task getting to the venue and remembering the test!"

SOUTH

By Helen Triggs

IT'S not often you enter a prelim test to find the judge is Jennie Loriston-Clarke, former BD Chairman and dressage Olympian. But that was the experience of show rider Samantha Roberts at **Sparsholt** College, Hants (28 February), and the result was an astonishing 86.74% score on Helen Skirton's Welsh section B stallion. Moelview Prince Consort.

The five-year-old show pony had not competed since he won the mountain and moorland championship at Olympia in December.

'Dressage is good discipline for him and keeps him interested," said Samantha. Rachael Clark's Zelanza (bv

Kate Jackson's impulse buy wins two novices



NORTH Chris McGrann has high hopes for 'ultimate pleasure horse' Moonshine II

Dressage highlights

Lauries Crusador) redeemed herself after a disappointing regionals with two good wins at advanced medium at Bury Farm, Bucks (28 February).

Rachael's other ride. Emma Gausden's Daddys Hit, won his first medium test.

'Zelanza is very talented but not confident in her ability," said Rachael. "It's taken a long time to get her out of her shell. Her canter work is awesome so she is capable of big marks.

"I rode Daddys Hit quite safely in the first test," added Rachael. "I thought'come on'in the second

one and got almost 70%."

At Wellington Riding, Hants (2 March), the centre's former chief instructor James Burtwell was back on form after a break of 3½ years from competing, until recently. He won both elementaries on Burlington B, a six-year-old by Benvenuto he bought as a three-year-old.

"I was a bit ring-rusty and had forgotten what fun it is to compete," said James, who will shortly take the gelding for two weeks' training in Germany with Monica Theodorescu. H&H



Results

BICTON COLLEGE Devon, 28 Feburary-1 March

Devon, 28 Feburary-1 March
Prelim 15Q.—1, Koos (B Wright) 65.22. rest.—1,
Sam (S Tancock) 70.22; 2, Khoya China Doll (P
Burner) 68.7; 3, Pentrefelin Miss May (A Williams)
65.65, prelim 17Q.—1, Koos 63.27. rest.—1,
Khoya China Doll 66.92; 2, Moher Prince (N
Candelaria) 65.77; 3, Gulliver III (J Clive) 64.42.
nov 22.—1, Extasia (L Summers) 70.96; 2, Red
Smiley (A Robinson-Barr) 64.83; 3, Sutherland (C
Collett) 61.55. rest.—1, Holywel Samber Dancer (J
Lo-Vel) 67.24; 2, Castleview Paddy (A Hopwood)
66.03; 3, Welstan Aidan (M Hutchinson-Field)
64.83. nov 37Q.—1, Extasia 69.82; 2, Red Smiley
65.7; 3, Sutherland 64.1. rest.—1, Holywel Samber
Dancer 66.4; 2, Tredellans Danny Boy (S Axten)
65.54; 3, Castleview Paddy (6.23.e. dem 43.—1,
Penhaligon Rubin Noir (L Hutchinson) 68.97; 2,
Langaller Sunlight (M Pascoe) 68.45. rest.—1,
Diamond Solar Eclipse (B Lloyd) 66.03; 2, Shanbo Ferniagion Rubin Work Christmisori Jos. 97, 2. Langaller Sunlight (M Pascoe) 68, 45. rest.—1, Diamond Solar Eclipse (B Lloyd) 66.03; 2. Shanbo Hazelnut (P McNulhy) 63, 79. elem 57Q.—1, Langaller Sunlight 69,64; 2. Donizetti II (V Caroline) 67.86; 3. Penhaligon Rubin Noir (L Hutchinson) 66.25. rest.—1, Top Of The Pops (R Howe) 71,79; 2. Donizetti II 67.86; 3. Diamond Solar Eclipse 55.71. med 61 rest.—1, Top Of The Pops 67.41; 2. Irish Mist (C Collett) 60.52. med 75Q rest.—1, Irish Mist 66.08. adv med 98Q.—1, Voolra (L Baker) 70.39. rest.—1, Aladdins Bazzaar (L Towl) 66.18; 2. Lucardo 64.08. adv 105.—1, Dantino (L Hutchinson) 68.61; 2. Amor HJ (A Parkyn) 66.67. rest.—1, Aladdins Bazzaar 62.64. PSG.—1, Dantino 67.11; 2. Amor HJ 66.71 para; gr IV 41 rest.—1, The Dutchman (J Milne) 66.67; 2. Hot Chocolate (H Hayward) 66.04. gr IV nov rest.—1, The Dutchman 65.94; 2. Hot Chocolate 65.63. gr II nov rest.—1, Trefeino Crocus (AM Cole) 70.48. gr II team.—1, The Silver Surfer 67.65. gr Ib team. gr II team.—1, The Silver Surfer 67.65. gr Ib team rest.—1, Trefeinon Crocus 68.6. gr III ind Q.—1, LJT Bacchus (D Criddle) 71.1 gr II ind ch Q.—1, My Rubicon (E Chanin) 71.14.

BURY FARM

Beds, 23 February
Prelim 17Q rest (C Alston).—1, Esprit De Leau (M
McBride) 67.5; 2, Country Ways (M Richardson)
67.3; 3, Katja (J Campbell) 66.36, prelim 19Q (P
Connolly).—1, Tribe (C Curan) 66.46; 2, Country
Ways 63.63; 3, Katja 63.4. nov 23 (C Alston).—1. Connolly).—1. Tribe (C Curan) 66.46; 2, Country Ways 63.63; 3, Katja 63.4. nov 23 (C Alston).—1. Dayrell's Miss Honey (J Turney) 69.63; 2, Falco V (A Nash) 68.7; 3, Eaton I (M Day) 67.59. rest.—1, Cashelbay Firm Friends (D Dobson) 63.33; 2. Witness A Dream (R Pocock) 61.48; 3, Lester (M Joyce) 60.55. nov 38Q (R Tipping).—1, Eaton I 71.77; 2, Kilgaron Kontender (L Bradley) 70.48; 3, Casario (E Forsyth) 66.93. rest.—1, It's Toyboy (F Woolman) 69.51; 2, Dassett Design (K Reddrop) 67.41; 3, Witness A Dream 64.67: elem 43 (S Lown).—1, Kilgaron Kontender 68.27; 2, Crack The Code (J Turney) 68.1; 3, Nolton Florentine (V Lovell) 67.58. rest.—1, Dornik Gold (S Rixon) 66.2; 2, Wixstone Oona (M Serdet) 65.34; 3, Aristis Grey (S Bambridge) 63.27. elem 57Q (A Duck).—1, Crack The Code 70.89; 2eq, Darlingscott (E Forsyth) & Designer Label (K Head) 67.5. rest.—1, Waddox (C Wooley) 67.85; 2, Spot Awole (S Paddock) 66.42; 3, Wixstone Oona 65.89. med 69 (P Bushell).—1, Cortis (E Eltham) 65.75; 2. DHI Cuba (R Waine) 65.45; 3, Daddys Hit (R Clark) 64.84. rest.—1, Foxcourt Accola (J Turny) 63.33; 2, Buster (J Taylor) 59.54. med 75Q.—1, Daddys Hit 69.73; 2. DHI Cuba 67.02; 3, Contis 66.21. rest.—1, Foxcourt Accola (J Turny) 63.33; C Duggan) 63.78; 3, Glarhirin Jasper's Jamboree (G Dilley) 61.35. adv med 85.—1, Zelanzor (R Clark) 70.14, rest.—1. Soltair Justice (E Forsyth) 63.32; 2. (D) Luggan) 63.78; 3, Glanhirin Jasper S. Jamboree (G) Diley) 61.53. adv med 85.—1, Zelanza (R) Clark' 70.14. rest.—1, Solitair Justice (E Forsyth) 66.32; 2, DHI Lightning Z (J Nissen) 63.38; 3, DHI Sancerrei IV (D) Duggan) 62.05. adv med 98Q (J Firmston-Williams).—1, Zelanza 67.5; 2, Aboriginal (M Webb) 675. rest.—1, Sir Stanley (C Evans) 61.18. PSG Q.—1, GF Deville (D Greenwood) 73.15; 2,

Half Moon Bardolino (R Drane) 67.76; 3, Cambel B Rainwool Bardonin (K Draine) (7,70, 5, calliber (R Hughes) 67,63. **inter I Q.**—1, Kermo's Dinaro Star (T Wright) 63.02. **PYO.**—1, Ruby Rose II (A Shirtcliffe) para gr II ind 74.57; 2, Ruby Rose II para gr II team 72.06; 3, Acapello Foldager (K

Aberdeen, 28 February Prelim 15Q rest (H Purvis).— 1, Kaledonia Royal (I Campbell) 71.3; 2, Chinook II (L Shand) 66.3; 3, Alphie (C Kean) 64.89. prelim 17 rest (P Baker).— 1, Kaledonia Royal 71.7; 2, Verity (K 61l) 68.65; 3, Edelweiss (A Miller) 66.15. nov 23.— 1, Denika R (I Fraser) 66.11; 2, Gastador LXII (V Gladwyn) 64.7. rest.— 1, Apollo HIS (A West) 71.11; 2, Jack XI (C Rankin) 67.96; 3, Counterpoint (S Cardno) 66.11. nov 37Q (V Graham).— 1, Gastador LXII 62.68. rest.— 1, Apollo HIS 68.39; 2, Dakota IX (A McGovern) 66.96; 3, Jack XI 65.18. elem 53Q rest.— 1, Cornelia (J Masson) 68.36. med 69 en, 28 February (A McGovern) 66.96; 3, Jack XI to b.18. etem by rest.—1, Cornelia (J Masson) 68.36, med 69 rest.—1, Cyprys IV (S McKen) 64.09, med 73Q rest.—1, Balhagarty Harvest Gold (J Burnett) 66.76; 2, Balhagarty Lord Thomas (J Eddie) 64.12. adv med 94 rest.—1, Balhagarty Harvest Gold

KEYSOE

KEYSOE
Beds, 24-25 February
24 Febr. nov 37.— 1, Diablo Dancer (C Gleeson)
66.25. elem 57 rest.— 1, Glenlivet II (H Babington-Smith) 64.29; 2, Soliet (K Aspinall) 62.68. med 73
rest.— 1, Glenlivet II 66.47. adv med 92 rest.— 1,
Elroon (V Gilby) 65.81. PSG.— 1, Flammengold (K
Holder-Vale) 61.84. nov FSM Q.— 1, Freestyle R
(A Brown) 69.44; 2, Randolph X (S Lucas) 68.61. elem FSM Q.—1, EDS Elegast Van Sombeke (K Bates) 68.85; 2, Randolph X 67.12. rest.—: Saetillano NVW (K Gubler) 64.04. med FSM (Saetillano NVW (K Gubler) 64.04. med FSM Q.—1, V Stravinsky (S Lucas) 65.17. rest.—1, Faconnable (A Collins) 66.172. Tobias Trotwood (M Fowles) 64.33. adv med FSM Q.—1, Elroon 67.2. PSG FSM Q.—1, Alivia II (J Hugo-Ross) 70.13: 2, Flammengold 61.13. 25 Feb: prelim 17 (R Baldwin).—1, SJL Convince Me (J Martell) 77.88. rest.—1, Lowmoor Neptune (C Leadbeater) 71.92: 2, Forever Freddy (S Fagan) 67.12: 3, Efigurante (L Shotton) 66.54, prelim 190.—1, Woodcrort (Stracker (A Brown) 77.5: 2, SJL Convince Me 74.09. rest.—1, Lowmoor Neptune 71.59: 2, Efigurante 67.73: 3, Sambeau (K Mahaffey) 67.5 nov 23.—1, Freestyle R 75.37; 2, Woodcroft Kracker 75; 3, Déjà Vull II (O Atkinson) 74.26. rest.—1, Abbotswood Gorgie Boy (V Thiriwell) 59.07: 2, Lantenders Gold (J Goff) 58.7. nov 39Q.—1, Freestyle R 75.52: 2, Déjà Vul II 68.79. rest.—1, Forever Freddy 62.59. elem 45 (A Bostock).—1, Wiseguy VII (R Smith) Déjà VII 168.79, rest.—1, Forever Freddy 62.59. elem 45 (A Bostock).—1, Wisseguy VII (R Smith) 67.93; 2, Boris VII (R Smith) 66.38, rest.—1, Afitilla J (S Darvill) 60.69; 2, Rushtons Ranger (S Green) 60. elem 59Q.—1, Wisseguy VII 66.44; Boris VII 65.16, rest.—1, Afitilla J 61.88; 2, Rushtons Ranger 60.47, med 61.—1, Lockley Quest (D Steans) 64.14; 2, Royal Eye (S Haines) 62.76; 3, Devil May Care (S Field) 62.41, rest.—1, Birchwood Jay Kay Care (S Field) 62.41. rest.—1, Birchwood Jay Kay (T Neal) 60.69. med 75Q (M Robins).—1, Don Dante (O Cooper) 71.76; 2, Orion Vestervang (B Skipper) 63.11; 3, Lord Navedis (S Reeve-Smith) 62.43. adv med 98Q.—1, Lord Navedis 63.55; 2, That's So Just William (M Jackson) 61.45; 3, Zsu Zso (I Whiting) 60.26. rest.—1, Riesenstern (K Richards) 64.34. PSG.—1, Vincente II (H Boswell) 67.5; 2, Utopia III (O Steans) 64.87; 3, WS Dominic (K Byrom) 63.55. PYO.—1, That's So Just William inter 158.95.

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE
Hants, 28 February
Prelim 15Q (J Loriston-Clarke).—1. Captain
Spiffing (R Morris) 71.3: 2, Fitzcarraldo (A Charbert)
70.22: 3, Tremar Flashlight (N Lomax). rest.—1,
Moelview Prince Consort (S Roberts) 86.74; 2,
Uskerty Siobahn (S Roberts) 78.04; 3, Imperial
Ruby (S Roberts) 75.87. prelim 19Q (M Keen).—

1, Captain Spiffing 72.5; 2, Acolido (M Bates)
71.59; 3, Templar Favour (E Kelly) 70. rest.—1,
Mumaathel (G East) 70.91; 2, Flightline Lucas (J
Pickup) 70.68; 3, Imperial Ruby 70.68, nov 23
(C Weston).—1, D Mockingbird (A Clark) 74.44;
2, Southern Cross Brisbane (F Gready) 67.04; 3,
Saris Salsa (S Goddard) 63.7, rest.—1, Pitingo II (S
Malpass) 70.93; 2, Wiusenblume II (K Donaghue)
68.15; 3, Paintball Picture Perfect (S Wilson) 67.59,
nov 38Q (J Wellham).—1, Premier Into The Black
(D Jackson) 71.61; 2, Saris Salsa 71.13; 3, Durdles (E
Kelly) 68.06, rest.—1, Pitingo II 73.87; 2, Paintball
Picture Perfect 72.1; 3, Simply Red II (B Almond)
70.97. elem 43 (B Marshall).—1, Zincdine Zidan
(M Kent) 69.66; 2, Real Maggic (W Lightbown)
65.69; 3, Premier Into The Black 59.48, rest.—1,
Mylor II (T Trart) 63.45; 2, Zavier (L Butterworth)
62.76; 3, Favory Valencia (K Carrall-Wilcocks) 65.69; 3, Premier Into The Black 59.48, rest.—1, Mylor II (T Trant) 63.45; 2, Zavier (L Butterworth) 62.76; 3, Favory Valencia (K Carrall-Wilcocks) 61.55. elem 57Q (J Surr).—1, Pepperwood Zandor (K Shepherdy 71.43; 2, Zinedine Zidan 66.79; 3, Real Magic 66.07, rest.—1, Karin JDJ (R Christopher) 64.46; 2, Marchways (S Gillgrass) 63.21; 3, Zwartje (R Tooley) 59.82. med 69 (B Marshall).—1, Rodhea (J Walker) 68.33; 2, Reuben Royal Blend (T Dunn) 67.12; 3, Half Moon Ripasso (H Bell) 60.15. rest.—1, Berkely TH (I Jones) 68.48; 2, Marchways 62.88; 3, Razzmataz (L Park) 62.58. med 73Q (P Watts).—1, Pepperwood Zandor 69.56; 2, Furst Fandango (M Ott) 68.53; 3, Rodhea 65.74, rest.—1, Berkely TH 65.15; 2, Bad Boy's Naomi Nora (V Felton) 63.68; 3, Quatro De La Heid Du Chefineury (P Bryan) 62.5 adv med 85 (L Baldwin).—1, Erlantanz (S Murray-Brown) 73.82. rest.—1, Marco VD Kuene (J Vale) 64.12; 2, Graiguenamanagh (R Barnett) 61.76; adv med 920.—1, Erlentanz 73.88; 2, Ffynnon (K Rausing) 53.92. rest.—1, Marco VD Kuene 61.49; 2, Maximillian Miss Wizz (F Parker) 57.97. PYO (P Watts).—1, Sir England (M Ott) PSG 61.97.

STEP ASIDE

STEP ASIDE
West Sussex, 28 February
Prelim 15 (H Wells).—1, Vincent R (A Bowen)
70.43. rest.—1, Harristown Bear (C Allen) 66.09;
3, Maesmynach Independence (S Richards)
65.22. prelim 190 (H Wells).—1, Vincent R 68.18.
rest.—1, Keystone Duchessa (S O'Dwyer) 76.59;
2, Romain Rouge (M Heath) 64.14; 3, Hey Jude
II (D Davies) 62.24. elem 40 (M Drewe).—1,
Rubican (R Andrews) 70.97; 2, FRS Principe Sym
(G Hyson) 70.48; 3, Aquilino MK 65.97. elem
570.—1, Keystone Daganay (S Lavandera) 79.46;
2, Rubican 68.04; 3, Waldfee (K Mathers) 60.89.
rest.—1, Just Jeremiah (J Pidgeon) 60.18. med
69 (P Green).—1, Don Domenico (H Lewis)
66.21; 2, Casandra Z (H Kenny) 63.945; 3, Briljant
(J Parkman) 62.88. rest.—1, Ben III (L Walkling)
65.45; 2, Waldfee 64.24, med 750_—1, Briljant
62.57. rest.—1, Ontario II (T Harvey) 66.49; 2,
Ben III 63.63; 3, DHI Fernando (B Brown) 61.49.
PYO rest (K Mepham).—1, Provender Galant (L
Hall) adv med 62.06. adv med 980_—1, Keystone
Diaggio (S Lavandera) 71.18; 2, Comanche Passoa
(SJ Cox) 70.39; 3, FRS Can Swing (G Hyson)
69.34. rest.—1, Mundham Demon Dancer (G
Zajacka) 66.97. PYO FEI.—1, Cello II (A Gould)
PSG 69.47.

VALE VIEW

VALE VIEW

VALE VIEW
Leics, 1 March
Prelim 13Q (J Ellis).— 1, Floordette S (K Burgess)
72.29; 2, Eyecatcher RV (A Walker) 64.79. rest.— 1,
Leverage (H Jackson) 69.17; 2. Flash Boy Boru
(C. Jenkins) 64.79; 3, Lochhill Tabithawitchit
(A Holder) 64.79. prelim 15Q (Z Feeney).— 1,
Eyecatcher RV 73.7. rest.— 1, Abney Sprite (M
Rook) 68.94; 2, Centaur Madonna (R Rowell)
65.65; 3eq, B Octavia (L Piggins) & Nefyn Swirl (R
Gair) 65.43. nov 24 (J Ellis).— 1, Gran Faux Pas (L
McDonald) 68.46. rest.— 1, Cubea N (V Aldridge)
71.35; 2, Millhouse Montaire (V Musson) 70.77; 3,
Springfieldpark Mr Yahoo (R Draper) 64.42. nov
37Q rest (Z Feeney).— 1, Millhouse Montaire

62.14; 2, Cubea N 61.25; 3, Springfieldpark Mr Valnoo 58.21. elem 44 rest (J Ellis).— 1, Fonz (P Sellers) 71.4; 2, Bathleyhills Sea Wurzel (G Johnston) 64.2; 3, Vuron (L Simmons) 64. elem 53Q (2 Feeney).—1, Edendawn William Wombat (L Mason) 64.85. rest.—1, Shannondale Jojo (S Wright) 65.74; 2, Bathleyhills Sea Wurzel 63.24; 3, Black MacGregor (K Goddard) 63.09. med 61 (N Herbert).— 1, Edendawn William Wombat (R MacCarthy) 64.83; 2, Foxborough Rock DJ (R MacCartny) 64.83; 2, FOXDOTOUGN ROOK DJ (S Snell) 64.48, rest.—leq, Darkie (L) Johnson) & Capello Rudi (L Essex) 66.72; 3, Marmite (C Concannon) 63.97, med 73Q.—l, Foxborough Rock DJ 68.97; 2, Vanjan (K, James) 62.06, rest.— 1, Barrachiel (L Hancock) 67.94; 2, Capello Rudi 66.91; 3, Darkie 66.03, adv med 85.—l, Freddie (J Parez) 70, 15; 2, Parel Standard (A String) 66.32 Parr) 70.15; 2, Royal Standard (A Staines) 66.32. rest.—1, Krack De Niro (G Phillips) 62.94. adv med 92Q.—1, Freddie 71.22; 2, Royal Standard 70.14. FEI PSG Q.— 1, O'Donner (E Hedger) 71.97; 2, Westhills Monaco (L Hurst) 62.37.

WELLINGTON RIDING

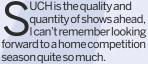
Hants, 2 March
Elem 45 (L Waller).— 1, Burlington B (J Burtwell)
74.48: 2, Bally Flagmount (P Bunter) 63.27; 3, Ella
(T Gormley) 58.79. rest.— 1, Galant Sprinter (E
Carter) 64.65: 2, Royal Quest (R Smith) 63.44; 3,
Marples Trifolio (D Shepherd) 61.03. elem 57Q.—
1 Burlington P 70.71; 2, Show (Grid (2) icelbrara) 1, Burlington B 70.71; 2, Show Girl (Z Leishman) 65.89; 3, Bally Flagmount 63.75. rest.—1, Galant Sprinter 62.32; 2, Marples Trifolio 61.6; 3, Royal Quest 59.1. med 61 (J Gillett).—1, Winsome KWF Quest 59.1. med 61 (J Gillett).— I, Winsome KWI (C Knox) 62.58, rest.— 1, Opposition Detective (K Johnson) 69.65; 2, Welton Charis (C Hayward) 66.89; 3, Deco (J Harding Heitzmann) 65.69. med 73Q.— 1, Furst Finess (Z Leishman) 67.94; 2, Winsome KWF 64.41, rest.— 1, Nibeley Union Hit (C Roberts) 72.5; 2, Welton Charis 68.82; 3, Opposition Detective 67.79, adv med 85 (N Condition). 1 Vocal (Weight) 65. met.— 1 Goodman). — 1, Verdi (J Wright) 65. rest. — 1, Marco VD Kuene (J Vale) 61.91. adv med 98Q.— 1, Verdi 60.65. rest.— 1, Marco VD Kuene 63.68.

WEST WILTS EC

Wilts, 26 February
Prelim 13.— 1, Impressario Von Faulkenhorst (K
Vincent) 66.8. 2, Ballyconneely Rebel (S Fitch-Peyton) 66.6. rest.— 1, Zachary (S Thomas) 67; 2, Turlough Trigger (J Down) 66.4. **prelim** 14Q.— 1, Ballyconneely Rebel 63.1; 2, George (L Dixon) 58.3. **rest.**— 1, Donna Duero (M Lawless) 67.9; 2, Woottonheath Strider (C Hogg) 66; 3, Zachary 65.6. **nov 28.**—1, Corrigeenroe Conor (S Fitch-Peyton) 69.3; 2, Marston Park Legacy (R (Gritchreyton) 69.5; 2, Marston Hark Legacy (K Cook) 68.1; 3, Rockmount Vincent (A Bingley) 67.9. rest.—1, Annandale Just Annie (N Jack) 64.5; 2, Miss Dotty (J Guthrie) 63.1; 3, Samsons Spice (S Jenner) 57.7. nov 34Q.—1, Secret Picnic (S Way) 77.9; 2, Corrigeenroe Conor 70.6; 3, Visual Art I (L Dixon) 67. rest.—1, Annandale Just Annie 65.4; 2, Miss Dotty 65; 3, Woottonheath Strider (C Hogg) 64.3 elem 44.—1 Eiglein (F Mlen) 68.2; Walds Ad.3. elem 44.— 1, Fidelio (E. Allen) 68.6; 2, Waldo P (A Westcott-Allen) 63.2. rest.— 1, Marston Park Legacy 67; 2, Playtime II (S Andrews) 66.6; 3, Shamassa Spring (J Stares) 64. **elem 500.**— 1, Secret Picnic 71.4; 2. Fidelio 67.5; 3. Razz Jazz (S Ford) 67.1. **rest.**— 1, Slieve Bloom Clover (V Bailey) 64.2; 2, Ceriska (L Bradstock) 63.5; 3, Shamassa 64.2; 2. Ceriska (L. Bradstock) 63.5; 3, Shamassa' Spring 63.5. med 69.— 1, Umberto IV (A Baker) 66.2; 2, Singing Herbstglanz (J Leighton) 62.7; 3, Romanola (J Prichard) 61.8. med 73Q.— 1, Singing Herbstglanz 63.9; 2, Hillcrest Cody (P Bunter) 63.9; 3, Romanola 60.4. rest.— 1, Nibeley Union Hit (C Roberts) 66.3. adv med 85.— 1, Legend (C Green) 63; 2, Wish To Be Famous (R Trobridge) 61. rest.— 1, Superman (C Hughes) 61.7. adv med 92Q.— 1, Wish To Be Famous 62.9. rest.— 1, Superman 61.7; 2, Crawlands Snapdragon (J Harvey) 58.5. PYQ.— 1, AEA Julius (C Stickland) 67.8; 2, AEA Julius 67.5; 3, Landalex (S Oakley) 63.7.

Comment Pammy Hutton

'Dressage is spreading its wings'



With two places at the winter championships, fitness is my enemy! But onwards and upwards — the summer season is practically halfway through as far as qualification for the summer nationals is concerned.

British Dressage (BD)
membership had reportedly risen
by 7% by the end of last year, so it's
good to see market forces working
as they should with extra
opportunities for the new influx.

Area Festivals saw 32% more competitors last year. This time they include classes up to inter I, proving how "professional" amateur riders are becoming. Meanwhile the friendly Team Quest is set to introduce even more newbies to our sport.

Dressage is spreading its wings geographically, too, with the lan Stark Equestrian Centre in Scotland recently approved to host affiliated shows. Then there are championships for veterans and retrained racehorses. So don't book that holiday just yet...

On the international front, there's good news for those with team aspirations but perhaps without the time or resources for extensive overseas travel.

As well as Hickstead CDIO, Bury Farm and Bishop Burton are due to host international fixtures. While in Cheshire, Bolesworth — such a hit with the showjumpers last year — has an invitational inter I freestyle scheduled in June.

Jo Graham and Susie Farnon, the new team at the county's Somerford Park, aim to run an international alongside its popular premier show in May 2016.

Rio beckons

IT came as quite a jolt last month to see that the Rio 2016 dressage ground jury long-list has been announced. It hardly seems possible that another Olympics is almost upon us.

The dozen top-level judges, from which five will be drawn to officiate

in Rio, includes two Brits, Stephen Clarke and Andrew Gardner. Sadly, because judges on the final panel must be of different nationalities, one of this esteemed pair will miss out.

I can't wait for another Olympics. Talking of Rio... Carl Hester! You simply can't retire after these Olympics, as is rumoured.

You are the best thing that's ever happened to British dressage. You are inspiring, your training threads run through every British success; those gold medals and world records wouldn't have happened without you. There is no accolade too great.

You told me years ago, as we stood watching a horse and rider, that I was looking at a future gold medallist. Her name was Charlotte Dujardin. But she would be the first to say that Britain's new place on the world dressage stage is, in the main, down to you.

Switching off...or on?

WHO says mobile phones and horses don't mix? If you have a tense horse, give more walk breaks and send that text.

So often we walk, trot, canter and

only walk again to cool off. More moments of relaxation are needed mid-work. So switch off the horse — and switch on the phone!

Oh pants!

THERE was a time when the only concern we riders had about our underwear was whether it would pass inspection should one fall off and end up in hospital.

Now there are added dilemmas. Does one put up with VPLor wear something uncomfortable yet invisible? Badly placed seams only make themselves known when it's too far into a training session to change. Yet daring to go bare isn't really viable lest the above happens.

Inevitably things have moved on, and last month's British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) International fair saw the launch of anatomically researched undergarments designed to protect the parts most riders need a medical textbook to locate.

Strategically placed padding and the endorsement of Mr Hester — now that's saying "pants" to ordinary knickers! H&H



Showjumping Jennifer Donald



HARTPURY COLLEGE GLOS

28 February-1 March

By Sarah Radford

KBIS BLOWN AWAY lived up to his name as he and Alfie Bradstock launched into their 2015 season with a Blue Chip B&C qualifier win.

"It was his first one of these," said Alfie, who also secured Blue Chip Karma qualification with Graham Fletcher's homebred at the Hartpury Spectacular in December. "We're just out getting him ready for the season. He was fourth in the Karma at Solihull on Thursday, and that was his first show of the year, so this isn't a bad way to start.

Paul Connor's 1.30m first round track had elicited 11 clears, setting the scene for a decent jump off. First to go was Adrian Whiteway and Carambow, who set the standard as they cut out a stride to the last, but their lead was surpassed two rounds later as Alfie and the chestnut It's The Business gelding shaved off 0.07 seconds.

Tackling an inside route to the penultimate fence, they found themselves a long way off the final oxer, but tapping into some of his racing skills, Alfie asked for a flyer that the scopey seven-year-old ably answered.

'I think I picked up quite a good one [stride]," Alfie claimed. "It was

everyone else that drew their breath!"

It was only eventer Jonty Evans and his advanced nine-year-old Cooley Rorkes Drift who came close to snatching the lead. The deceptively quick gelding - whom Jonty has earmarked as a potential Rio prospect — was up on the clock by 1.57 seconds, but tapped the penultimate vertical to permit the Fletchers' 21-year-old stable jockey to win.

"If he keeps going well enough this year he'll be aimed

at area trials — or at least that's what Graham would sav ashe's always optimistic,"said Alfie. to three shows

Taking Flight

EVENTERS continued to pose opposition for the showjumpers in the Blue Chip Karma

performance qualifier, where Louisa Lockwood took forward three of the eight contenders in the second phase.

She established a midfield lead with the rangy 17.1hh Ballyfarris Flight — 13th at Burghley last year but their advantage was snatched by more than two seconds by Tony Pearson and new ride Lordportside.

The 11-year-old Westfalian was originally bought for Tony's father Russell to jump amateurs, but the talented gelding has been swiftly 'stolen" by his son.

"We've had him 10 days, we've been to three shows and we've won three classes," said Tony. "I'd ridden him for my dad's friend Martine Sibley when he was five and it wasn't a hard decision to buy him. She called to say she was giving up and he was for sale, and we snapped him up."

Windsor-based Tony now plans to contest some continental dates.

> 'He's ready to start winning. He has a lot of scope so we'll do some international dates and step him up again, then do a few Horse Of The Year Show[HOYS] qualifiers,"Tony added.

three classes Tony Pearson on his new ride

We've had him 10

days, we've been

and we've won

Lordportside

Unbeatable Ella

ELLA NUTBEEN'S ride Artisan II may not be known as an indoor horse, but he proved unbeatable in the Halsall Electrical 1.25m qualifier, defeating strong opposition around the singlephase track to claim victory from a midfield draw.

Ella has been reunited with the former stallion this season after giving the ride to her sister last vear while she focused on Alevels. Now a student at Hartpury, Ella has become a frequent competitor at

'We're training with Paul Connor and we've been at this level for about a year now - we're just starting to jump two-stars," said Ella, who has owned the gelding for three years and has several of his youngstock from retained straws at home in Berkley.

"He's not a 'turny' horse, but he is very quick across the ground. In between the fences he has such a big stride he takes seconds off everywhere, so he can be hard to beat if he goes clear," she said. H&H

28 Feb: 1.05m. 1, Tanto (S Rundle); 2, Marnie Of Rossin (M Benneti); 3, Luctin De 28 Feb: 1.05m. 1, Tanto (S Rundle): 2. Marnie Of Rossin (M Benneti); 3, Luctin De B'Neville (K Peates). newcomers. 1, A Chance Affair (J Evans); 2, Downtown Billy (L Lockwood); 3, Another Proposition (L Lockwood); 1.10m. 1, Dilana SI (D Rogan Pfaff); 2, Alamo P (J Evans); 3, Kings Cavalier Prophet (L Lockwood); 1.15m. 1, Bengel (M Betteridge); 2, Artisan II (E Nutbeen); 3, Warner Robbins (H Hattea): Blue Chip Karma performance Q. 1, Lordportside (T Pearson); 2, Ballyfarris Flight (L Lockwood); 3, Kings Cavalier Prophet. Easidri 1.25m. 1, Warner Robbins; 2, Coming Star II (M Hall); 3, Liberty M (A Kent); 1 Mar: newcomers/1.10m. 1, Vados M (R Barker); 2, Dilana SL; 3, Belasco (R Daniel): 1.15m. 1, Eliene (O King); 2, Dilana SL; 3, Influential (K Spiller): H&H Foxhunter. 1, Loose Talk (R Barker); 2, Calcourt Alternate (M Cornock); 3, Rambler VDL (G Ellison). 1.20m. 1, Quidelle Du Reverdy (R Stanley): 2, Vivre La Vie B (C Addis); 3, Florian Van Orshof (C Mills). Halsall Electrical 1.25m. 1, Artisan II; 2, Darien (N Barry); 3, Calcourt Luxurious. Blue Chip && Cch Q. 1, KBIS Blown Away (A Bradstock); 2, Carambow (A Whiteway); 3, Warno (Z Henshall). (A Bradstock); 2, Cara 3, Warno (Z Henshall)









SPURION HOUSE BREEDING Contents

4 'We're trying to push the boundaries'

Plans are afoot at a Shropshire centre that could revolutionise the British breeding industry

12 Covering all bases

What it takes to be a multi-talented sire — and a cross-discipline producer

22 All that glitters

Behind the scenes with Diamond Hit, the diminutive super-sire still active at 18

28 Vet clinic: artificial insemination

How to maximise success for your mare

32 Starting from scratch

Top riders reveal what it means to compete on horses they have bred themselves

38 The same, only different

Is cloning set to change the face of breeding?

50 Carole Mortimer: tears and triumphs

Why the foaling season can be an anxious time



- 1 Big Star, one of Stallion Al's most famous names, is ready for his close-up (p4)
- **2** Tina Cook on her homebred De Novo News at the World Equestrian Games (p32)
- **3** Diamond Hit: superstar, super-sire and super teeth (p22)
- 4 Two clones of the dressage mare Poetin Z: you talking to me (or me)? (p38)



Sport horse breeding Stars in the making

'Europeans are crying

Tullis Matson and his team at Stallion AI have led the field in semen collection, and now there are plans afoot for further developments that could revolutionise the British breeding industry. Plus, a certain gold medalwinning stallion has brought the world's elite breeders clamouring to their door. Jennifer Donald pays them a visit

CIENTISTS in white coats are peering intently through microscopes and clouds of nitrogen spill out over large metal vats, the contents of which are set to be exported around the world. The hub of Stallion AI Services reveals a high-tech company that's going places.

With its engaging and forward-thinking founder and managing director, Tullis Matson, at the helm, this Shropshire centre has led the way in innovative breeding techniques, from radical advancements in the way semen is frozen, chilled and collected, to the way stallions are managed. And now the team are bidding to revolutionise the British breeding industry with a state-of-the-art new centre.

"We're always trying to push the boundaries," says Tullis. "To stay one step ahead of everyone else, you've got to be innovative."

Nestled in the flat surrounds of Whitchurch, the Matsons' Twemlows Hall accommodates Tullis' business, Stallion AI Services, as well as his brother Edward's thriving and equally revolutionary embryo transfer business (see Vet, p28). The centre attracts 80-90 stallions a year for everything from dummy training and semen assessment to freezing and export, and they have over 800 stallions in stock.

A flick through their stallion catalogue is akin to Tinder for mare owners — names jump out such as the Hales family's great showjumper Arko III, an exciting young Cornet Obolensky stallion called Black Jack, the backbone stallions such as Mill Law, Je T'Aime Flamenco and Libra K. And, of course, the arrival of Nick Skelton's leading showjumper Big Star has caused a real sensation.

"The export market has nearly doubled over the past three years — that's the biggest change



we've noticed," says 47-year-old Tullis, who employs the highly efficient stud manager Kate Ashmore to run that side of the business. "Just yesterday we sent one frozen export to the US and four to Europe. Last year we exported 1,413 doses of frozen semen to 19 different countries, with a total value of just over £1 million."

A family business

THE family farm has come a long way from its origins as a cheese dairy and stud centring on their father's Irish draught stallion Sportsman.

"It all started when we were naturally

covering a mare one day and unfortunately the stallion ruptured the mare inside and we lost her," recalls Tullis. "I thought there must be an easier way of doing this."

He discovered the solution in New Zealand, where the prohibitive expense of transporting broodmares between the North and South Islands meant that shipping semen had already become the norm. Tullis learned artificial insemination (AI) techniques out there.

"I used to hatch chickens, so when I came back, I cleaned out all my incubators and used them to heat the extenders and collection

out for a British stallion'





Big Star in action: the Olympic gold medal-winning showjumper has sent export levels soaring

It gave us great pride in keeping Big Star for Great Britain at the Olympics and now it's given us great pride to keep him at stud in Great Britain. He may be Dutch/French but he's British through and through!

Gary Widdowson, who turned down some huge offers to stand Big Star in Europe



equipment," he laughs. "We had a tiny lab in the bottom yard; to start with I think I was putting everything in the mare except for semen.

"Our stud vet, Dick Quan Taylor, was a great mentor, and he said 'let's have a go at this AI game'. Experimentation was big back then now it's much more precise. We became one of the first commercial places to inseminate frozen semen and it spiralled from there."

The company's rapid development into one of the industry leaders stems from a close relationship with the bovine industry. Nearby cattle breeding businesses Genus and Cogent

have been instrumental in helping Tullis develop new techniques on the equine side, starting in 1996 with freezing semen.

"Genus said this is the way forward," says Tullis. "We started doing it and it just got bigger and bigger."

But disaster struck in 2001 when foot-and-mouth hit and Genus went into lockdown.

"I thought, 'my business is finished if Genus pull out'," he says. "So I got an old, second-hand freezing machine and we set up a little lab here. It actually worked so well that when foot-andmouth passed we carried on doing it ourselves. We've been lucky that the industry has continued to grow."

A typical day now begins with the first stallion ready and waiting outside the collection room door by 7.30am — no natural covering takes place here. During their busiest times the team are collecting from a stallion every 15 minutes, and freezing takes place within a couple of hours of collection.

"Time is of the essence," says Tullis. "If everything runs smoothly the semen seems to freeze better. We process it through the lab, analysing all the semen samples, checking

Sport horse breeding Stars in the making





Above: The Stallion AI team at their base near Whitchurch, Shrops photobombed by Je T'aime Flamenco (left) and Big Star (right) Left: Tullis Matson and Kate Ashmore work in the lab while staff collect from Black Jack in the background. They process up to 15 collections a day

to mare in 24 hours

9am: phonecall arrives requesting an export for a mare

By 9.30-10am: Kate will have raised the export certificate

By 12.30pm: the certificate arrives from the export branch of Defra in Carlisle

1.30pm: vet arrives, semen collection is done and the vet signs the paperwork

3.30pm: the packaged semen is picked up by TNT for shipment

By 9.30-10am the following day, the semen can be anywhere in Europe



Semen is processed and despatched rapidly

for motility and overall viability.

"In the summer it's pretty much flat out. We do 15-20 frozen semen shipments per day and process 10-15 collections for fresh and chilled semen orders. Frozen semen is not so time critical, it can wait until the mare's ready, but with fresh and chilled semen, the mare is waiting for it, so timing is everything [see box, above]."

Leading the way

THE innovative Tullis, who began his career as a point-to-point jockey and assistant to racehorse trainer Philip Hobbs, is developing a new venture setting up freezing units in Saudi

"I love teaching people," says Tullis, who also lectures on various subjects.

His other passion is finding ways to freeze semen from stallions that have historically proved difficult. Tullis' involvement with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust earned him the Marsh Christian award for conservation in genetic biodiversity.

"Suffolk Punches actually changed the way that we process all semen," says Tullis. "Certain breeds are more difficult to freeze than others and when you find the key to unlock the problem, it helps them all. We can now freeze 90%, whereas a few years ago it was 60-70%."

In the laboratory, where the magic happens, microscopic techniques mean that they can quickly assess sperm motility and separate live and dead sperm cells. It's all about quality.

"If you have a mare, you want her in-foal first time. We're never going to hit that target, but we want to get as close as possible," says Tullis.

Is fresh and chilled still the preferred option for mare owners?

"Frozen works very well, but not for all mares," says Tullis. "Fresh is the most fertile so would be most preferred, but you can't always get hold of the fresh stallion you want. Freezing has really improved, and the results with good quality frozen semen are as good as chilled, if not better.

"A lot of our expertise still comes from the bovine industry - they have a lot more money for research and development – which has helped the equine industry to achieve better results," he explains. "I'm not a scientist, but you do learn all the time."

The latest innovation in the bovine world is

"We're not quite doing it here yet — a few people are within the equine industry, but it doesn't work quite as well as it does with cattle," says Kate. "There are a great deal of interesting new techniques available, but all are not yet financially viable on a commercial level. For Stallion AI Services cloning is also not on the cards at the moment, but never say never!"

A new arrival

THE biggest testament to the team's status in the industry came when Gary Widdowson, owner of Nick Skelton's 2012 Olympic gold medal-winning showjumper Big Star, turned

down some staggering offers from elite European studs in favour of sending his 12-yearold stallion to this British centre. Not only has Big Star brought the team to the attention of the global industry, he's also proving to be one of the most fertile stallions they've ever encountered.

'We're very lucky to have him here because he could have gone anywhere they were biting Gary's hand off," says Tullis. "He could have sold the semen rights 10 times over and made very quick easy money, but no, Gary's stood by us 100% and kept him in

Certain breeds are more difficult to freeze than others and when you find the key to unlock the problem, it helps them all

Tullis Matson, whose work with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust has proved beneficial across the board





Exceptional semen quality – in the 2014 breeding season 87% of mares scanned in foal over the first two cycles



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		Paerel	

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DANZADOR by Diamond Hit Lauries Crusador XX

Sport horse breeding Stars in the making



Stud manager Kate Ashmore examines the semen



Lab tech Nikoletta Gouzopoulou assists processing

From the average stallion we might get 10 doses per collection, but then you have stallions that really break the mould and Big Star is one of those

Kate Ashmore, stud manager, on the phenomenal fertility of their new resident

77

Britain. It's great for British breeding and it's a brilliant platform for Stallion AI Services, but it's nerve-racking. Every night before I go to bed I flick on his camera to check he's OK. But he's an easy stallion to work with, his temperament is great and his semen quality is excellent."

When *H&H* visited, Big Star, who is currently coming back in to light work after picking up an injury last year, was on one of three two-week collection stints at the centre.

"From the average stallion we might get 10 doses per collection, but then you have stallions that really break the mould and Big Star is one of those—yesterday he gave us 33 doses, which is so good when you've only got him for a short period of time," says Kate.

Big Star first became publicly available for breeding last year when they opened their books for 20 selected mares. Now on the European market, Tullis has chosen one AI station in each of Italy, Belgium, France, Germany and Holland at which all Big Star inseminations must be done.

"Managing the semen from the UK means we can handle sales and distribution more efficiently. There was a worry that with multiple semen agents across Europe and considering that the semen is in such high demand, it would be difficult to monitor," says Tullis. "Big Star's stud fee is in the top price bracket for a sport horse stallion [£4,000 plus

Expansion plans — the future of British breeding?

AN exciting new development will expand the Stallion AI Services operation to a new location in 2016, thanks to some inspiration from European breeding centres.

"What we're doing here is brilliant, but this new place will hopefully make us one of the best in the world," says stud manager Kate Ashmore, who is overseeing the project.

Tullis Matson says: "In Europe they have stallions who are actively competing, collecting and shipping semen, so we're building a facility to have competition stallions in long-term residence at the centre."

Hand-picked riders will be affiliated with the centre and their services will be offered to stallion owners.

"What sells a stallion is people seeing it competing," adds Tullis. "So we'll be able to help our stallion owners run a competition schedule alongside their breeding schedule. At the moment stallions come in to us all year round; in the summer for fresh or chilled collections and in the winter for semen freezing. However, the new facility will enable stallions to continue their training programme alongside their

breeding commitments.

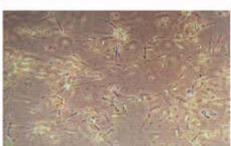
"This will be particularly useful in maintaining quarantine status and allow clients to export chilled semen within the EU. This won't be a necessity for every stallion, but it's another string to our bow."

What is currently a flat piece of concrete will be transformed into a 30-acre state-of-the-art venue housing 28 stallions, up from the current 20. Facilities will include a large outdoor school, all-weather individual turnout paddocks, generous stabling, washrooms, solariums, servicing areas, lecture rooms and a viewing gallery above the collection area.

There will also be greater capacity for frozen semen storage and a laboratory three times the size of the current one. Biosecurity is key and, knowing Tullis' innovative side, this smart showcase will be filled with the latest gadgets.

"You're looking after someone else's animal and quite often that stallion is their life," says Tullis. "We want to give that reassurance that they're 100% looked after. And a happy stallion equals happy semen."





Under the microscope: Big Star's semen is checked for sperm motility, and live and dead cells separated

VAT] but when you've got a stallion actively competing and he's at the top of his game; he's hopefully going to Rio, he's already got the gold medal and he's got youngstock on the ground doing very well and getting graded."

Big Star, it would seem, ticks every box.

"For Stallion AI, good pregnancy results are vital because that's what will help sell him," adds Tullis. "We got 87% of mares in-foal within the first two cycles last year. We know it works."

He's proving such a great marketing tool for the company that an extra member of staff has been employed to deal with the enquiries.

"It'll be one of the first times we've exported such a high volume of semen from the UK to Europe from a high-level stallion," says Tullis, more used to importing such huge quantities, most recently from Totilas and Cornet Obolensky.

"It's brilliant to see the Europeans crying out for a British-based stallion — it's nice to turn the tables the other way. He's great for the British industry," he says.

Big Star's owner Gary Widdowson hadn't intended to stand Big Star until after he retired, but the seed was planted when his Quick Star x Nimmerdor stallion was recuperating last year.

"I had some mares with Tullis and I thought, 'I like this man, I trust this man', and what he said felt like real advice," he says. "I realised he was at the cutting edge and we'd prefer him [Big Star] to be of benefit to a British stud. It's done a lot of good for Tullis' company too. Before, I think a lot of people in the industry thought the UK was a bit backward.

"But it gave us great pride in keeping him for Great Britain at the Olympics and now it's given us great pride to keep him at stud in Great Britain. Big Star may be Dutch/French but he's British through and through!"

And that sums it up — British breeding is making waves, with Stallion AI proudly flying the flag. Exciting times lie ahead. H&H



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BLACK JACK

BLACK JACK is standing in the UK for one year only. He will be based at **Stallion Al Services** (Twemlows Hall). He is a son of Cornet Obolensky - the sought-after world no. 2 jumping sire; his dam is a daughter of the TB Heraldik, long time leader of the world event sire rankings and 2015's no. 2, with offspring such as Olympic champions Butt's Leon and Butt's Abraxxas. He is the dam-sire of 2012 Olympic champion La Biosthetique Sam.

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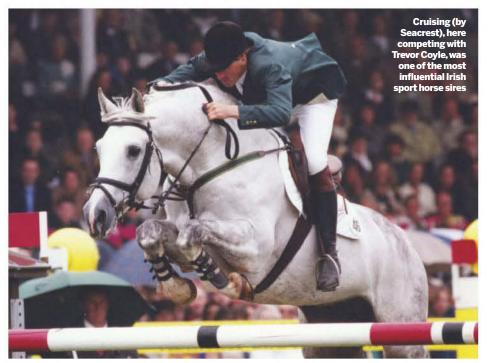


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Sport horse breeding Multi-discipline sires

Covering all bases

Carole Mortimer examines what it takes to be a multitalented stallion – and a cross-discipline producer



look through the annals of any sport horse studbook will reveal a number of stallions who have produced offspring that have been successful in several disciplines.

While the obvious retort is that previous sport horse breeding was much less discipline-specific than it is today, nonetheless there are stallions who stand out as multi-taskers in their stud duties, some of whom were prolific.

One of the earliest of these super multipurpose sport horse sires was Furioso II. He was the son of the legendary thoroughbred Furioso, who was purchased from England and stood for 20 years at the French National Stud at Le Pin.

Furioso II (1965), in effect a half-bred, was one of many offspring for his dam Dame De Ranville (also the dam of Furioso II's full-brother Mexico — the sire of Le Mexico, another successful dual-purpose sport horse sire).

Born in France, Furioso II stood at the famous German Vorwerk stud, acquired by George Vorwerk who was immediately impressed by the stallion. He is quoted as having said: "Such a stallion is born only once every hundred years".

Sire of legends

PICTURES of Furioso II show a strong, proud stallion with powerful quarters. He became known as a "stamp stallion" as his offspring "inherited his good feet and legs and his outstanding neck and shoulder".

Over the course of his stud life he sired hundreds of sport horses and became a leading sire based on money earned by his offspring — including the Olympic team gold medallist showjumper For Pleasure — and, in 1990, the top producer of dressage horses. He also sired event horses.

He produced around 70 approved sons, many of whom also proved to be influential dual-purpose sires. They include the legendary sire Voltaire who, although noted for his successful international jumping offspring, also sired many dressage horses, such as the British grand prix horse Astonish.

Purioso, another of Furioso II's well-known sons, was also a prominent dual-purpose sire — he is the sire of grand prix dressage horses Olympic Cocktail, Arnold Thor and the Britishridden Keystone Favoriet, as well as the Olympic showjumper Wendela (Jenny Zoers).

Amor (1959), a Holstein with a dose of Trakehner, is another who proved hugely



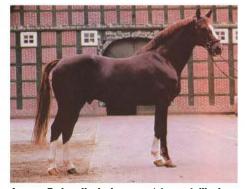
Contender: the Holstein's influence is seen in many of today's showjumpers, including Contendro I

influential in both dressage and jumping. A long-lived sire, he had many mares during his 25 years at stud in the Netherlands and is now credited with changing the face of the Dutch warmblood.

It is said that "his offspring usually had good conformation and a fighting spirit", and recorded that 58 of them competed at high levels in showjumping and 117 in dressage.

His influence can still be seen in the pedigrees of Dutch competition horses and





A young Furioso II, who became a 'stamp stallion', passing on his strong conformation

stallions. Dressage stallions Ampere, Jazz (who also has Furioso II) and KWPN jumping sires Animo, Farmer, Impuls, Hamilton and VDL Jimtown all have Amor close in their pedigrees, as do the grand prix dressage horses Thriller, Sisther De Jeu and Olympic Barbria.

Standing proud

SO what attributes must a sire possess in order that his offspring prove multi-talented? Sarah and Orwell Davies, who own the Foxcourt Stud in Wales, have their opinions.

"First, a stallion has to have and pass on a good temperament so that offspring are trainable," says Sarah. "He needs to be athletic and have good conformation — horses that are not correct don't last — and be a good, but not flashy, mover with correct paces."

Foxcourt Stud stood the Hanoverian stallion Abraham (Akzent II x Matrose) whose offspring has been successful in all disciplines including the show ring.

"Abraham had a wide variety of mares but he had the right temperament and the right qualities to pass on," says Sarah.

Sarah's husband Orwell agrees that a stallion needs temperament, ability and conformation in equal parts, but he also thinks a superior stallion has something else.

"To me a stallion has to look like a stallion — not a gelding," he says. "He has to stand proud on four legs and say 'look at me'. If he looks like a stallion he has more chance of stamping his stock and Abraham certainly stamped his stock — you could recognise them."

Looking at the figures

WHILE it is important that a stallion stamps his stock, the outcome will of course depend



Sport horse breeding Multi-discipline sires

also on the mare's type and bloodlines.

Chairman of the British Hanoverian Horse Society (BHHS), Katy Holder-Vale says: "Lots of people used to breed all-purpose horses and that was in the main down to the mares they had. My own stallions [Elroon and Flammengold] have produced jumping horses from unlikely mares, but once you start looking back you nearly always find jumping lines."

There is however, as Katy points out, a more scientific way of assessing why some stallions can sire offspring for more than one discipline, and that is by looking at the marks of the performance test. The mark of 100 is the benchmark — below that a horse was inferior in a discipline and above it superior.

"A mark around 70 means that a horse is pretty awful to ride on the flat and it is this aspect that usually accounts for a low overall mark," explains Katy. "In contrast, some stallions will score over 100 in both disciplines and, maybe despite their dressage pedigree, they also have an ability to jump. For example, French bloodlines nearly always produce horses that are good jumpers but not good on the flat, while Holsteiners can go both ways."

Katy stresses that during a performance test stallions are ridden by and have to cope with several riders of differing ability. She recites the history of the famous jumping sire Grannus (Graphit x Ozean).

"Grannus failed his test because he couldn't cope with different riders, but he went on to jump internationally and became a significant sire of international jumpers," she says.

To me, a stallion has to look like a stallion. He has to stand proud on four legs and say 'look at me'

Orwell Davies, of Foxcourt Stud on what makes a stallion stand out as a sire

STALLIONS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE TEST SCORES







Top jumping sires Codex One (left) and For Pleasure (centre), and dressage stallion Londonderry (right)

Quattro B 1990

(Qredo De Palstra x Pandore Du Thot): Dressage 121.15 Jumping 128.02.

A significant sire of horses competing internationally in all disciplines.

Diarado 2005 (Diamant De Semilly

x Corrado I): Dressage 138.42 Jumping 144.01.

The performance test winner was the highest marked in the jumping and second

in dressage. He scored 9.5 for his canter and rideability. Although promoted as a jumping sire, should be a dualpurpose sire.

Graf Top 1993 (Graf Grannus x

Calypso II): Dressage 126.93 Jumping 127.88.

The 2011 Hanoverian of the year is another with equal skill in both disciplines. Promoted as a jumping sire, he has many jumping offspring, but also sired the international dressage horse Georgio Armani (Ulla Salzgeber). William Fox-Pitt has acquired the five-year-old Butts Aiden by him.

For Pleasure 1986 (Furioso II x

Grannus): Dressage 91.91 Jumping 145.95.

This leading jumping sire has no significant dressage progeny.

Londonderry 1995 (Lauries Crusador xx x Warkant):

Dressage 134.56 Jumping 88.91.

Attractive to the dressage breeder but not the showjumping breeder.

Codex One 2002 (Contendro I x

Gluckspilz): Dressage 6.83 Jumping 8.58.

An Olympic showjumper but possibly not a dressage sire.





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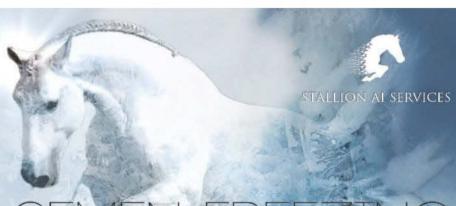
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"In jumping a horse can get away with a more tricky temperament — but not usually on the flat.

"Rideability is usually the reason that stallions score well in both dressage and jumping, and a stallion that produces offspring that can do any job usually comes down to their temperament." H&H



Louella Inschallah, whose dam was by Furioso II, is the only stallion in all three discipline tables

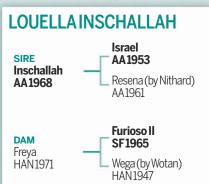
'Top dog'

STATISTICS taken from the British Horse Database Sport Horse Annual of 2000 list the late British-based stallion Louella Inschallah in all three discipline tables of the "top 20 living sires by total progeny winnings" — the only stallion to achieve this. That year he was the fifth highest dressage sire, the fourth highest eventing sire and the third highest showjumping sire.

Louella Inschallah, brought to the UK by Louis Massarella of the Louella Stud as a three-year-old, was by the Anglo Arab Inschallah, imported into Germany from France as an improving sire. His dam Freya was a daughter of Furioso II.

His offspring included the showjumping stallion No Complaints and showjumping mare Valhalla, international eventers
Just Tallullah, Incan Winter, Chuckelberry,
C'est Moi and grand prix dressage horse
Out Of The Ordinary. He is the damsire of eventing mares Kings Fancy, Kings Gem and Kings Temptress.

"Breeders liked him as, due to his Anglo Arab blood, he had a lot of quality," said Lucy Gillingham of the Louella Stud. "He also had a fantastic elegant front that he always passed on. Put to a thoroughbred he threw a horse that looked like a thoroughbred but one that had natural elevation and a good jump. He was a super, proud stallion, very clever and definitely top dog."





KWPN foundation sire, keur stallion Olympic Cocktail (by Purioso), ridden by Anky van Grunsven



Metall (Ferro x Ramiro Z) has sired showjumpers as well as Carl Hester's Olympic medal winner Uthopia

Stallions who currently appear in two of the World Breeding Federation sport horse sire rankings

Kannan (Voltaire x Nimerdor) — showjumping 1st, eventing 21st
Contender (Calypso II x Ramiro Z) — showjumping 20th eventing 14th
Vigo D'Arsouilles (Nabab de Reve x Fleurie de Manoir) — showjumping 17th, eventing 19th
Cruising (Sea Crest x Nordlys xx) — showjumping 53rd, eventing 5th
Quite Easy (Quidam de Revel x Landgraf I) — eventing 68th, dressage 78th

Other British-based multi-talented stallions

Demonstrator (**Dynamo x Pik Bube I**) — sired successful horses in three sporting disciplines as well as many show horses

Cevin Z (**Coriall Z x Carthago Z**) — current popular sire of showjumpers and eventers **Dutch Gold (Dutch Courage x Golden Cloud xx)** — sire of dressage and event horses and now a significant damsire

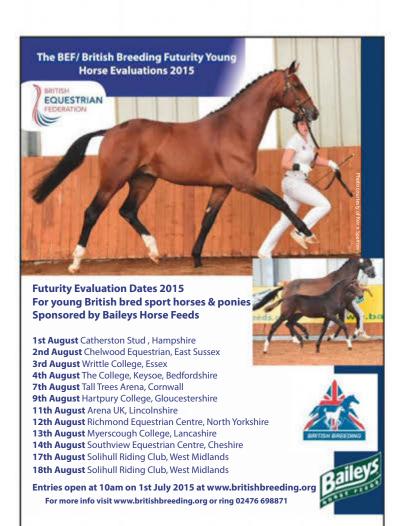
Ramiro B (Calvani x Wendekreiss) — current sire of showjumpers and eventers



Dutch Gold ranks among the top British-based stallions



Demonstrator's offspring have excelled across the disciplines





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Brechfa Brynach

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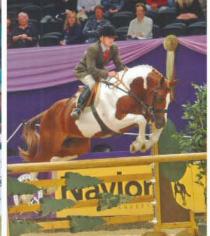
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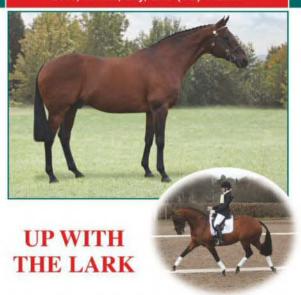
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Sport horse breeding Diamond Hit



Allthatglitters

Alice Collins meets the little super-sire with an abundance of talent in the dressage arena, who is still in demand for his regal genes at the age of 18

diminutive bay stallion stands in the cross-ties basking under the solarium on a chilly February day. He yawns and paws the ground. It's hard to believe, looking at him, what a megastar he truly is.

For Diamond Hit is a plus-70% international grand prix competitor, sire of grand prix horses and half-sibling to two other stellar stallions, Sandro Hit and Royal Hit.

The now 18-year-old Diamond Hit is

undoubtedly dressage royalty.

Brought to worldwide competitive prominence by British rider Emma Hindle, he now lives at the slick and modern Sprehe stud in Löningen, Northern Germany.

The Sprehe brothers, Albert and Paul, acquired Diamond Hit in late 2012. Emma's father John had recently died, and she had less and less time to commit to the horses as her involvement with the family's Brookhouse property business grew.

Sprehe's manager, Hubertus Funke, was the

man responsible for picking up the phone after hearing "a rumour that Emma might be considering selling Diamond Hit".

At the time, Emma and her string were based in Germany.

"She found she no longer had so much time for the horses as she had to go back home to England," says Hubertus. "It was my job to negotiate a clear and fair price for both sides. It was important to Emma the quality of the home for him; she didn't want him stuck in some dark corner somewhere."

Pictures by www.kevinsparrow.co.uk, Peter Nixon, www.hippofoto.be, Julia Rau, www.trevor-meeks-photography.co.uk and Jon Stroud Med





Verden, 2002: at the world young dressage horse championships under Ania Engelbart

Hubertus won't reveal how much the stud paid for Diamond Hit, but he admits it was a substantial sum.

"Normally for a horse retired from sport, the price would have been too much money, but Mr Sprehe was confident that breeders would use him and he'd justify the price."

Emma received an initial lump sum for the horse, and further sums for the next five years.

The stallion's list of illustrious progeny is long. One of his elite mares is Diamantina, above, who scored almost 70% under Maree Tomkinson at WEG 2014

'Like sitting on a cat'

BORN in 1997, the Oldenburg son of Don Schufro was bred in Bramsche, Germany, by Gabriele Harder-Brune, who still owns his 28-year-old dam, Loretta.

Ås a foal he was bought by Paul Schockemöhle, and was later licensed as a ½-year-old colt.

Gabriele used Don Schufro on Loretta because of "his parentage, the very good basic gaits and the fact that he was already a very successful dressage horse himself".

These are the same reasons breeders still flock to Diamond Hit today.

Paul was also attracted to the foal's bloodlines, having stood Don Schufro previously.

"The mother, Loretta, was an exceptional mover, and had passed that on to Diamond Hit and other offspring," he affirms.

"Diamond Hit was not so long-legged, but was still a long-legged long

"Diamond Hit was not so long-legged, but was still a very nice type and was vice World champion and vice bundeschampion — which was unlucky as I also owned the horse that beat him [Don Davidoffl."

Paul estimates that around 10,000 sport horses now carry the blood of Loretta.

Emma first spotted Diamond Hit after his two silver medal finishes as a five-year old.

Having initially been interested in Don Davidoff, she and Paul, who owned them both, agreed that Diamond Hit was "the better horse".

"I sat on Diamond Hit at Paul's place," she recalls fondly. "He was incredible — it was like sitting on a cat. He's not very horse-esque in terms of feeling. He had so much movement everywhere, and was short with it."



Sister act

DIAMOND HIT'S dam Loretta had 12 foals (two of whom were by embryo transfer in 2007), including the licensed stallions Sandro Hit and Royal Hit. She had five filly foals, one of whom, Loretta Live, is by Royal Dance and is a full-sister to Royal Hit.

Loretta Live has recently been acquired by the New Zealand-born Reay Campbell (pictured, with Loretta Live), who lives in Scotland and owns Caledonia Sport Horses.

"I cannot believe how lucky I am to have been able to purchase this amazing mare from such an influential and important family," says Reay. "She really is breeding royalty. She has already produced a highly successful son, Super Mario, who was third in the Danish young horse championships with Marianne Helgstrand. It is very exciting to have Loretta Live in Britain.

"She is now in foal to Franziskus — this is the same F line that produced Super Mario, who is by For Compliment. I'm very much hoping to use Don Schufro this year, so the offspring would be very closely related to Diamond Hit," she says.

"Emma looked for a grand prix horse and Diamond Hit showed ability for it," adds Paul. "And Emma's not so big; she looked very fine on him."

Emma agrees that the stallion's stature didn't hold him back.

don't stop if things

get difficult or go

wrong. And that's

tricky as a rider,

because they

never say no

Emma Hindle

"The compact ones can sometimes be stuffy as the levers of the back aren't flexible; but to

be both that short and that flexible is quite odd," she says. "Normally, it's the bigger horses with longer lines that have the greater range. His was quite a different feeling."

Diamond Hit continued to be "quite different" in his ridden education.

"He was the most talented but frustrating horse to teach," explains Emma. "He was always so capable that he'd react not quite as you'd expect; for example in the changes

he'd always be early behind or late in front.

"When he was learning the half-pass he clipped his chin with his front leg — he's so flexible he's almost double-jointed. He's the only horse I know that you can stand directly behind and he'll look you straight in the eye."

His flexibility didn't always work in his favour, though.

In 2003 he had a colic operation after a

Sport horse breeding Diamond Hit



A plus-70% competitor: Diamond Hit and Emma Hindle in the grand prix special at Mannheim

hernia in the small intestine slipped into his testicle sac.

"Most horses can't touch their own testicles, but he could with his hindlegs," says Emma incredulously. "That made wound management after the operation a nightmare. Again, the complications were so 'un-normal'."

Emma nicknamed Diamond Hit 'Basil', as he had a "wide-eyed expression, just like Basil Brush".

Despite his perpetually surprised look and always-round eyes, it came as no shock to Emma that the horse's talents carried him quickly up the dressage ladder.

At seven he did his first international

Diamond Hit's breeding

DON SCHUFRO was himself an Olympic bronze team medal winner in Hong Kong in 2008 and has sired many elite mares and licensed sons.

Diamond Hit's Westfalian damsire Ramino — from jumping lines with a good dose of thoroughbred blood — was the 1983 stallion performance test winner in Adelheidsdorf. In 1987, under Melanie Kötter, he won team gold at the junior European showjumping championships. He also had many wins and placings at grand prix.

Diamond Hit has sired numerous elite mares, including Diamantina, who scored almost 70% under Maree Tomkinson at last year's World Equestrian Games in Normandy.







Diamond Hit's sire Don Schufro (left) took team bronze in Hong Kong; his damsire Ramino (above) was a performance test victor

prix st georges - and won.

"He wasn't difficult to train, but you had to do it a bit differently to other horses — had to think of things in a different way. But I've always said: if you can't train a horse with *that* much potential to grand prix, then you should give up," says Emma.

In 2005, Diamond Hit was proclaimed the VTV Oldenburg performance stallion of the year, his licensed son Donavan was the bundeschampion in Warendorf, his daughter Loxana was the Oldenburg mare champion mare, and — on the day the award was presented — three out of four Diamond Hit progeny were approved at the Oldenburg

stallion licensing.

Now, his licensed sons number 54.

Give and take

THAT year, demand for him as a breeding stallion rocketed, and Emma had a tough balance to strike.

"There was a bit of give and take; as a rider you want to compete, but the breeders want him at home. He was getting five or six mares a day, so going away for a few days would be upsetting 40 breeders," she says.

When Emma bought Basil, he already had a few offspring on the ground, whom she felt were "quite special".

Like father...



...like son



SPOTTHE DIFFERENCE..

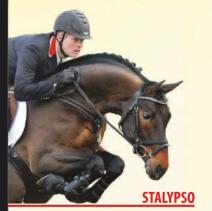
Diamond Hit (above, left) passes on more than his physical characteristics. His son Daily Deal (above, right) is out of the Lauries x Florestan I mare Lia, from a family choc-full of state premium mares. The 2008-born licensed stallion also stands at Sprehe, and the two can see each other from their stables.

Reserve Champion of the NRW licensing in Münster-Handorf in 2010, Daily Deal has inherited first-class gaits and excellent rideability from his sire, as well as his incredibly friendly nature.

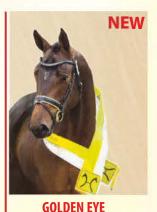


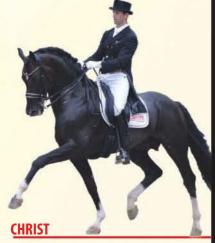
Oldenburg champion mare Loxana is just one of Diamond Hit's many talented, acclaimed offspring

Elite-Stallions 2015



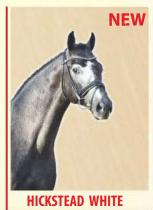


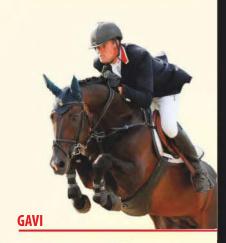




















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Sport horse breeding Diamond Hit



Bowing out: retirement from his ridden career, at the BBSH stallion show at Hartpury, January 2013

Ultimately, it was the almost mutually exclusive dual goals of using a stallion for fulltime breeding and active top-level competition that were to prove the catalyst for Diamond Hit's sale to Sprehe.

Paul Sprehe's daughter Kristina competed the stud's De Niro stallion Desperados at the London Olympics. Back then, he was still standing at public stud, but the pressure of combining a breeding and sport career meant the stud was on the lookout for another proven grand prix competitor to plug the gap left by taking Desperados off the stallion roster - and making him available by frozen semen only.

Step forward Diamond Hit.

His purchase also freed up Kristina to move Desperados from the stud's EU-approved export centre - which has strict rules and procedures in place in order to merit its status to train elsewhere.

"Keeping a stallion and offering him chilled while he is in elite sport is almost impossible," says Hubertus, who points out that pressure from breeders wanting to see breeding stallions out competing drives many owners to keep trying the dual-pronged approach.

The best example of this going wrong was Totilas [who was sold to Paul Schockemöhle in 2010]. They thought they'd buy him for sport and breeding, but it wasn't possible for him.

"One example of a horse who could handle it was Donnerhall, but there are many more examples of it being impossible."

'I never had a horse that talented'

DIAMOND HIT did breed while he competed with Emma, but he's likely to have been even more successful at both had he not been attempting the two jobs concurrently.

Covering the dummy puts enormous strain on stallions, and grand prix work is equally demanding.

"I never had a horse that talented to just sit in the piaffe. And the problem with the changes was fitting them on the diagonal for such a small horse he had so much scope," enthuses Emma, who puts Basil in the same talent and temperament category as the likes of Valegro and Totilas: "He can be hot to show off, then quiet again.

"Those exceptional horses have so much power and expression, but with relaxation to take it all in their stride. There aren't many

Indeed, when we visit Sprehe and Basil is run in-hand around the frozen arena, twinkling under the winter sun in his blingy rug, you see him grow with pride and self-confidence. Then he passages back to the stables, impressively but politely, not yanking on the leadrope. Hubertus jokes fondly that as he's plaited, he's pumped up, thinking he's going to a show.

A surplus of talent can be a hindrance to a sport career though, as horses are fragile

"His only downfall was his ability to overstretch himself," recalls Emma. "He had niggling injuries from that, which was a shame

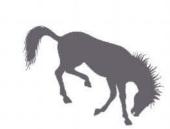
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H&H's Sarah Jenkins rides the 'kind and loving' stallion in 2008; today, Sphrehe staff learn from him

as it kept his career smaller than it otherwise would have been.

"You could never really put on 100% gas—you could run him on 50% gas and do well because he was so giving and talented," she says.

Horses like him don't stop if things get difficult or go wrong. And that's tricky as a rider because they never say no, so you don't know how much you can push because they never indicate when it's enough."

'He likes them small and grotty'

ON the breeding side Basil was a little less motivated, according to Emma.

"Those D lines don't have much libido - and

that can cause frustration. There are only particular women that float his boat. He has his type; he likes them small and grotty and he sticks to it."

That aside, Emma describes the horse as "a dream to own and spend time with".

"He's the most likeable horse; he's the man every man wants their daughter to marry. He's clean in the stable, kind, loving and anyone can handle him. He likes everybody. Such a likeable person."

Emma had such faith in the horse that on an *H&H* photoshoot in 2008, when the then dressage editor Sarah Jenkins visited Diamond Hit in Germany, she boosted the awe-struck journalist onto the horse for a ride — no hat, gloves or proper boots (of course health and safety wouldn't permit this now).

And the schoolmaster role is one Diamond Hit is still fulfilling now, at Sprehe: some of the staff have the privilege of riding him to learn how the grand prix movements should feel.

So has the stud's faith in this little stallion paid off? And have the breeders appreciated him? It certainly seems so.

Since returning to Germany and standing at stud full-time, Basil has been sought by breeders from all across the globe. And with a stud fee of €1,700 (around £1,250), Mr Sprehe is surely right; just like the L'Oréal advert — Diamond Hit, you are worth it. H&H

Basking in the glow: relaxed and diminutive, Diamond Hit appears to belie his megastar status





If you're planning artificial insemination (AI) for your mare this season, how can you maximise your chances of success? Andrea Oakes identifies the most important points to consider

Sperm from certain

stallions has better

post-thaw motility

ability—than

others

Logistical planning

DURING the breeding season, a mare ovulates (releases an egg) every 18-24 days – a process called cycling. Each egg forms inside the ovary in a structure known as a follicle.

"A mare is in season — or oestrus — for four to

seven days, although this can vary from two to 12 days," says vet Emma Houghton of Endell Veterinary Group. "She is then out of season (in dioestrus), for 14-15 days."

Timing plays a vital role in successful AI. The point of — Swimming ovulation can be manipulated to enable insemination of semen at the optimum moment,

according to its type (see below).

'During a season, follicle growth goes handin-hand with an increase in the oedema [fluid] within the mare's uterus," explains Emma. "When the follicle reaches a key size of 35mm we can use either one of two ovulationinducing drugs, Chorulon and Ovuplant.

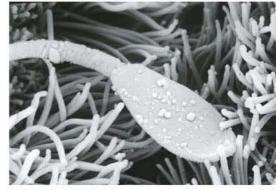
"The mare should then ovulate within 24-48 hours, which gives us a window to order and inseminate semen prior to ovulation. Follicle size may be smaller, though, particularly in ponies, so it helps to know a mare's breeding history."

Semen type

A good semen sample will contain billions of sperm, but which type is best for your mare?

> Fresh: straight from the stallion (who must be on-site or nearby), fresh semen offers the highest fertility rates and is longest-lasting once inseminated. It must usually be used within three

hours, but this varies between stallions. Chilled: next best fertility-wise, chilled semen has been mixed with extenders, preservatives and antibiotics to lengthen its lifespan to up to 30 hours. This enables insemination at home and widens stallion choice to further afield in the UK, or even



Under a microscope: a good sperm sample contains billions of sperm

Europe. Timing is still an issue: it must be ready at the premises prior to your mare ovulating. ➤ Frozen: fertility rates associated with frozen semen have improved with the use of modern extenders and veterinary management. It can be stored ready for use and opens up a worldwide pool of stallions, but the considerable veterinary input required can push up costs (insemination must take place within six hours prior to, and four hours after ovulation). Sperm from certain stallions has better post-thaw motility - swimming ability than others.

Semen choice will largely depend upon your mare's age and breeding health. Fresh or chilled will maximise an older mare's chances of conceiving - provided it

arrives on time, prior to ovulation.

"Our breeding season coincides with several bank holidays," says Fred Barrelet, a stud medicine specialist at Rossdales Veterinary Surgeons, adding that weekends and postal or courier failures can scupper plans to inseminate inside a critical timeframe.

"Semen should have been processed at an EU-approved collection centre and must be accompanied by the original veterinary health certificate. It is illegal to use semen from an unknown source or imported from abroad without the required health documentation."

Mare preparation

GOOD general health is essential for a mum-tobe, so keep your mare's vaccination and worming programmes up to date and her hooves and teeth well maintained. But how else can you prepare her for AI?

"We'd rather see a mare too light than too heavy, so aim for fair condition," says Edward Matson of Twemlows Stud Farm and AI/ET (embryo transfer) centre. "Like females of all species, horses are more likely to conceive on a rising plane of nutrition."

If you're sending her to a stud or clinic for AI, preentry health requirements could include checks for

contagious equine metritis (CEM), equine viral arteritis (EVA), equine infectious anaemia (EIA) and strangles.

Edward points out that pre-breeding examinations are not always definitive in predicting a mare's chances of conceiving.

"It is difficult to assess a maiden [first-time] mare's reproductive health before she comes into season," he says. "A specialised equine repro vet might suggest endometrial swabs or more complex biopsies with a potential problem mare. Around 80% of problems occur once the semen is inserted in the uterus, however, and you can't tell too much till then.

"If your mare has foaled previously, give the vet as much information as you can about her breeding history. This should include when and how she was bred, the type of semen used and the cycle she conceived on — or why she didn't. This can save a lot of time and money.

"Be realistic with an older maiden mare. She may be super-fertile or she may not, but you won't know until you try."

Stallion fertility

HIS looks, performance and temperament may tick all the right boxes, but will your chosen stallion's semen get your mare in foal?

Relevant fertility data can be hard to obtain, warns Fred.

"The key measure of a stallion's fertility is his per-cycle conception rate, but many stud owners don't publish this," he says. "The number of mares he gets into foal tells you nothing about the time taken. What you need to know is the breeding efficiency achieved with his semen.

"Ask the stallion owner, stud or semen vendor for the number of mares that become pregnant per cycle. A lot depends on management and the individual mare, but you need to hear an answer of about 50%.

"My advice with a young, maiden mare at the start of the season is to invest in semen from a top stallion. Most sport horses have a career behind them, however, so you may be breeding from a middle-aged lady. As with many species, the chances of getting a mare pregnant drop off with age.

"If she is older than 14 and barren [was not covered/failed to conceive the last breeding season], don't use the most expensive stallion or frozen semen. Your chances of getting her pregnant more efficiently will probably be better the following year, once her fertility is proven and she has foaled without complications."

Venue choice

Pregnancy rates improve when

minimised—certain

potential stress is

horses may be

more relaxed

athome

AI can be carried out at home, at an equine clinic or at a specialist breeding centre. What

might influene your choice?

"Studies show that pregnancy rates improve when potential stress is minimised," says Emma. "Certain horses may be more relaxed at home, but you will ideally need stocks for ultrasound scanning and insemination."

Insemination with frozen semen is particularly difficult to carry out at home, yet fresh and chilled

also need a vet's input.

"An AI package at a stud or clinic could well prove cheaper, as driving and visit fees often add up to more," says Emma. "The benefit of a clinic is that the vet can examine a mare as often as necessary without the owner having to be there.

"Every mare is different, but an experienced repro vet with knowledge of AI will be able to see more detail in the uterus and follicle to tell exactly where she is in her cycle. Better care

Finding the right balance

WITH so many different factors to juggle, it's easy to lose sight of the goal.

"You're not only looking for the best stallion to breed with your mare, but the best chance of conception with his fertility and semen type," says Edward Matson. "But while your mare's age and breeding background may dictate the choices you make, don't breed for the sake of it. It's all about striking the right balance between your budget, your mare's needs and the all-important quality of the foal you hope to produce."

will most likely bring a better result – and fewer scans could lower costs."

Potential pitfalls

IT sounds so simple — and often it is — yet AI can disappoint the unwary.

"Make sure you know the costs up front," says Emma. "Ask if stud or clinic prices include extras such as livery, drugs and pregnancy scans, and whether you'll pay the same the second time around if your mare does not conceive on the first cycle.

"Most Als are fine, but complications can occur. Not all mares cycle every 21 days. Others produce excessive uterine fluid so that when the embryo enters the uterus it cannot survive and is lost. There's also a reasonably high rate of twinning with some mares. The uterus is typically not large enough to sustain both embryos — while there's a high success rate if one is "squeezed" within the appropriate time, this does involve a risk to the other one.

"We don't always know of potential problems until we start looking." H&H





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Homebreeding rather than buying ready-produced equines demands a significant investment of time and energy as well as money, but also brings rewards.

Martha Terry investigates what it means to riders to compete on horses they have bred themselves

Billy Congo has the scope and

temperament from

his father, and the

strong canter from

his mother

William Funnell

AKES are best home-made — they just take time. Could the same be said for horses? "Mug's game" and "money pit" are common expressions with which to brush aside the ups and downs of breeding, but, left to the professionals, roulette becomes rather more like simple mathematics. A growing number of elite riders are appearing at top level on horses they have bred themselves and in which they have invested their time and skill. Is this sentimental, fun or quite canny?

No fluke

BILLY CONGO is arguably as good as any horse William Funnell has ridden. He's won many grands prix and European team gold. He's no fluke. William and Donal Barnwell's Billy Stud breeds up to 60 horses every year from the best jumping bloodlines. William now rarely rides anything but homebreds.

Billy Congo's mother, Billy Autumn, was herself a homebred who is now

winning grands prix in Canada. His sire, Vechta, competed on Nations Cups teams with William.

"We got what we were looking for as Billy Congo has taken the best from both parents," says William. "The temperament and scope from his father, and strong canter and hindleg

Olympic homebred

medal-winners

Ben Maher – team showjumping gold on Tripple X III, London 2012

Sara Algotsson Ostholt – individual eventing silver on Wega, London 2012

Megan Jones – team eventing silver on Kirby Park Irish Jester, Beijing 2008

from his mother [by Animo]. His results are doubly satisfying because he's a homebred."

William reduces the gamble by producing his horses immaculately, although they are not usually backed and started by him — "I just get the glory at the end of a massive team effort". A great rider will improve any horse, and how much more so if they have been involved with that horse since before conception.

Mary King describes herself as "incredibly fortunate" that the first three horses she bred all went to CCI4*, and all their offspring bar one to CCI3*. But how much is down to their genes, and how much to their upbringing?

"I like to think it makes a difference knowing

each other so well," says Mary, who used Rock King and Primitive Rising for her first five foals.

"I do everything with them myself, from checking the young horses daily, to backing and producing them.

"Is it just coincidence that my homebreds have been very straightforward to back, while some others have been trickier? I think they have a deep-down trust of me, and seem to enjoy me getting on their back."

Fellow eventer Sam Watson was too young to have had a hand in his World Games partner Horseware Bushman's parentage (by Puissance out of his family's broodmare Clear Conscience). But he remembers leading Bushman to the field when he was 13 and Bushman was just a whippersnapper, and believes that created a bond.

"You learn about their personalities when handling them as babies," he says. "You can do everything 'your way' with them — building trust is so important in those formative years."

Danish dressage rider Lisbet Seierskilde, who took her homebred Jonstrupgårdens Raneur (by Ragazzo) to London 2012, believes you have a head-start when you begin riding a horse you've known all its life.

"You know how your horse will react to new things," she says. "You have a strong connection because you have been with it from day one."



The legend lives on

A few days after the great Headley Britannia died last April, her rider Lucinda Fredericks (both pictured, above) was eventing two of the mare's offspring at Larkhill.

"I cried in every single phase," she says.
"But the memories of 'Brit' are all good and I wouldn't be where I am today without her. With her foals, there's an element of me wanting to do her justice."

Lucinda has bred eight from her treble-CCI4* winner Headley Britannia, and three more from her other top-class mare Prada. She is particularly excited about the Jaguar Mail-sired stallion Britannia's Mail and the mare Little Britannia, both of whom she still owns and will take up the grades.

"I believe they are the only foals ever born with both parents at the Olympics," says Lucinda of the horses who were born in 2008, the year that Headley Britannia and Jaguar Mail were competing in Beijing. "You can see and feel Brit in them. They have that bright, 'up for it' brain.

"Hopefully they won't have to try as hard as she did, because they have so much more natural ability. Brit wasn't actually that talented or scopey, but she had such heart," she says.

"It means so much to me to ride them and I just hope they'll follow in their mother's footsteps."



We have the foals in

the fields around

us and my dad

in for a jump

Karline de Brabander

will bring them

Belgian showjumper Karline de Brabander finished puissance runner-up on her Olympia debut in December with the homebred stallion Fantomas De Muze (Sandro Boy x For Pleasure). She says that riding her horses from the start gives both them and her confidence.

"We have the foals in the fields around us,

and my dad will bring them in for a jump," she says. "Once they're two or three they'll start to work and then come to my yard when they're between three and five, by which time we know each other very well."

Knowing the parents

MARY'S foundation mare was the precocious Kings Mistress, who won a novice event on a dazzling score of 11 aged five. She was only diverted to the breeding sheds after she

severed a tendon in the field - which kickstarted Mary's breeding venture.

As Mary never had the chance to see how

good Kings Mistress was, she can't compare her with her offspring, such as Kentucky winner Kings Temptress, But even with Kings Temptress' offspring, Mary does not believe it's a particular advantage to have ridden the mother. However, she has a special interest in

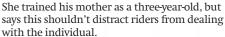
> Chilli Morning out of Kings Temptress, as she has ridden both parents.

"They are sort of twins, but one is more like her and the other like him. so it will be interesting to see how they turn out," she says.

Heather Blitz has owned her Pan Am team gold and individual silver medallist Paragon (Don Schufro x Loran) since he was a foal.

her embryo transfer pair of five-year-olds by







Lucinda Fredericks' Headley Britannia, flanked by the mares who carried Little Britannia and Britannia's Mail



Chip off the old block

TINA COOK achieved the ultimate homebred goal in riding both mother and son around the same track.

De Novo News came ninth at Burghley in 2013, 11 years after his dam Douce De Longvaut (pictured, above) also jumped clear.

"I thought there was a four-star in Doris [Douce De Longvaut] because she was a fabulous jumper," says Tina, who produced both horses from scratch.

"But I thought her legs probably wouldn't take it, so I put her in-foal [to Last News] six weeks before Burghley - and that was De

"If you'd planned it to work out like that, it would never have happened," Tina adds. "I just chose a thoroughbred sire, produced the offspring as well as I could, and it was in the lap of the gods.

"She has passed her big jump, great brain and sharpness down to all her foals — and the fact that one has gone on to be a world championship horse makes me very proud."

"[Knowing the mother] gave me plenty of insight as to what Paragon's strengths and weaknesses might be," she says. "But I try to start all the youngsters with the same systematic approach."

However, knowing that a horse might behave like its parents can be an advantage. Lisbet's broodmare, Samantha, passes her character on to her offspring.

"They all love to work and satisfy their rider," says Lisbet.

'They are very gentle in temperament, so I know never to be too hard on them or they'll lose their trust in me.'

Karline knew both of Fantomas' parents. Sandro Boy's top-class showjumping career meant that he needed no introduction, and Fantomas' dam, Cordula De Laubry, was one of the first horses Karline backed.

'Fantomas is very similar," she says. "They are both extremely energetic and scared of the most stupid things, like grass or a dog.

'When Cordula was about four, she had a really naughty foal with a big character - that was Fantomas."

Bye bye baby

RIDERS of this level can sell horses like cars if the price is right, they go. But isn't there just a touch of sentimentality with those you've brought into the world?



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Sport horse breeding Homebreds

Mary says that although she never usually has any qualms about selling horses, homebreds are different.

"It's a real wrench, you feel like you're selling a child — even if they're never going to win you a four-star," she says. "It surprises me how hard I find it. But it's turned out to be very lucrative for me; I've built a house through selling homebreds."

Karline says "it's always hard to say goodbye". She sold her first really good horse this year, the stallion Cadeau De Muze.

"I was the first one to ride him and we learned so much together," she says. "It was good that I was away when he left, as I would have cried a lot. But now I see him doing well with Philippe [Lejeune] and it makes me happy."

But William says there's no room for sentimentality in business.

"They're all for sale at the right price, even Billy Congo," he says, behind the safety net of his brilliant stallion being a vital cog in the breeding operation.

"But what is great is that you're a part of that horse's story forever, and I take pride in that."

Sam says that while the homebred aspect "makes you more attached to a horse", once you have to support a family, it becomes easier to sell. "Medals are the hope and letting that go is hard," he says. "But failing to provide for your family because you chased a dream you couldn't afford is worse.

"It just makes it extra special when they take you round a four-star, looking after you and your loved ones by putting pennies in the bank!"

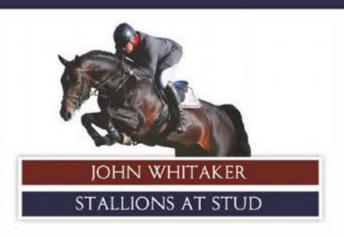
Success with any horse at the very highest level is more rewarding than most riders could ever imagine. But to do that with a horse you've dreamed about before it was born — that's the icing on that home-made cake. H&H







Pictures by Peter Nixon and Kit Houghton



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Sport horse breeding The impact of cloning



OR many, cloning is still a concept straight out of science fiction, and the idea of genetic replicas of today's equine stars competing in the future hard to contemplate. But could this be the direction in which breeding is moving?

In 2013, H&H broke the news that a clone of William Fox-Pitt's Olympic partner Tamarillo had been born in the US, and more recently the breeding world has been rocked by the revelation that the late, great stallion Cruising has two clones on the ground in Ireland.

However, sport horse cloning is still in its infancy compared to polo, where breeders are one step ahead.

In 2014, 10-goaler and world number one

Adolfo Cambiaso helped his La Dolfina polo team to their eighth victory in the Argentine Open, the world's most prestigious tournament. Among his string of top class polo ponies was not only the renowned mare Cuartetera, but also one of her clones, both of whom played in the same match, Adolfo swapping from one to the other mid-chukka.

Cuartetera 01 is not the first clone to grace a polo field — Show Me, a clone of US thoroughbred Sage, made history when she played under Adolfo in the 2013 tournament.

Since teaming up with Alan Meeker's Crestview Genetics in 2008, Adolfo has had several of his top ponies copied multiple times, with around 100 clones now on the ground.

Whereas in polo, cloning breaks no breeding

restrictions, the procedure itself is illegal in the UK, while both artificial insemination (AI) and cloning are banned under international racing rules. But in 2012 an unexpected change of heart by the FEI reversed their previous policy of banning clones from competing, instead announcing that it "will not forbid participation of clones or their progenies" from international competition.

For breeders, the news opened up both the possibility, and the question: what does cloning mean for the sport horse industry?

The science side

CLONING involves a tissue sample being taken from the horse and the DNA-containing nucleus of a cell transferred into a recipient



egg, or oocyte, which has had the DNA removed. This egg is then implanted into a recipient mare to be carried to term.

Tamarillo and Cruising are just the latest in a line of sport horses to have been successfully cloned by the two major companies offering the process commercially, ViaGen in Texas and Cryozootech in France.

In 2008, former world champion Gem Twist, regarded by many as one of the best showjumpers of all time, was cloned by Cryozootech. One of the two clones produced, Murka's Gem, is based with Peter Charles.

"Gem Twist was best horse ever to have jumped. His lines must be kept alive," says Peter.

Other cloned sport horses include Hugo Simon's grand prix showjumper ET, Olympic



Judy Ann Melchoir pilots popular stallion Levisto Z, whose clone Levisto Alpha Z is now competing

showjumper Quidam De Revel, Ulla Salzgeber's career-making dressage partner Rusty, grand prix showjumper Levisto Z and the prolific dressage sire Jazz.

Of these, just the Levisto Z clone Levisto Alpha Z is competing, jumping successfully in Belgium under Judy Ann Melchoir. But for the majority, cloning in sport horses is used for breeding purposes.

"It's a tragedy that you can't breed from top horses who have been gelded," says Finn Guinness, owner of Tamarillo, and his clone, Tomatillo, who is now based at Finn and wife Mary's Biddesden Stud in Hampshire. "We want to keep Tam's lines going."

Finn hopes that Tomatillo will begin his work as a sire this year.

For Cruising's owner, Mary McCann, three-year-old clones Cruising Arish and Cruising Encore will allow the stallion's DNA to continue to produce top quality horses in Ireland.

"If Cruising had only been a successful

showjumper, we wouldn't have cloned him," she explains. "But because he was such a successful sire we cloned him to preserve his traditional Irish Sport Horse genetics. This isn't a showjumping exercise; it's a breeding exercise.

"Cloning successful stallions is an important step forward for breeding,

but the clone of a gelding still has to prove himself as a good sire."

While there is no guarantee a clone will measure up the original animal, most will demonstrate the same behavioural traits.

"There's a bit of déjà vu as the two youngsters do a lot of things he [Cruising] used

to do, such as lip-flapping," says Mary. Similarly, when William Fox-Pitt first saw To matillo playing in the field he told $H\mathcal{S}H$: "It's uncanny how like Tam he is"

It costs \$165,000 (£108,000) to clone a horse



All-time great: Gem Twist and Greg Best leap to team and individual silver medals at the 1988 Olympics

at Tomatillo's birthplace — Kathleen McNulty's Replica Farm in the US. The foal is then delivered to its owner at 60 days old. But Kathleen stresses there is the option of a syndicate, having set up a group of investors to finance the Tamarillo and Cruising projects. As a representative of ViaGen, the company that carries out the cloning procedure, Kathleen takes on around 150 projects per year, and that

'We have a lot of interest from the US and Belgium, and from Ireland too," she says. "I actually have many new clients who have no interest in breeding – they are doing it for performance."

A matter of cost versus benefit

It's a tragedy that you can't breed

from top horses who

have been gelded

Finn Guinness on the decision

to clone Tamarillo

WHILE Cruising's clones could be entered into the Irish Sport Horse (ISH) studbook — which along with others such as the Anglo European Studbook (AES), Zangersheide, Oldenburg and KWPN, allows clones to be registered — not all studbooks are in favour of the idea.

The Warmblood Studbook of Ireland (WSI) does not allow the registration of clones and its managing director, Thomas Reed, worries that cloning will prove detrimental to sport horse breeding.

"One of my concerns is potential saturation of the gene pool," he explains.

"Does Ireland really need thousands more foals sired by Cruising? For me, we are breeders of horses, not manufacturers. With cloning there is no creativity involved; we are producing nothing new.

"AI is the Argos catalogue of breeding, and cloning is an extension of that. We've already got people who can't spell a stallion's name importing his semen.

"I think cloning is a big mistake, and not good for sport. Randomness is what makes sport interesting, and cloning limits that.







Three-year-old Cruising clones Cruising Encore (left) and Cruising Arish (right) demonstrating the same coat colour, but a variation in white markings

Are clones identical?

ALTHOUGH cloning is often thought of as producing an exact replica of the original, they are not 100% copies.

The most obvious difference is often a variation in markings. White markings are not driven by genetics, but due to random migration of white cells during foetal development. As a result, the shape and placement of markings is likely to differ between the original and clone.

Clones are not 100% duplicates of the donor animal.

"The cell which develops into an embryo contains the genes of the donor's nucleus, but also the mitochondrial DNA from the recipient oocyte [egg]," explains Eric Palmer

"Therefore, as an individual, a clone — male or female – is only 99% equal to the donor due to the mitochondrial DNA from the recipient oocyte.

"These mitochondria are transmitted during natural reproduction by the female line only."

As a result, the progeny of a stallion clone will be indistinguishable from progeny sired by the original horse. However, a female clone will pass on the mitochondrial DNA from the recipient oocyte to her offspring, who therefore can be distinguished from that of the original.

Cloningis a big mistake,

and not good for

sport interesting;

cloning limits that

is what makes

WSI's Thomas Reed on

the impact of cloning

sport.Randomness



Irish Sport Horse stallion Cruising (Sea Crest x Nordlys xx) at the age of three

"Then there are the potential repercussions — we risk the population having health issues that won't be recognised for years," he adds.

Thomas is just one of many people who

oppose cloning. There are a number who worry about the ethics surrounding it — whether it is a step too far in interfering with nature — and the fact that it can take hundreds of attempts to produce one cloned embryo which can be transferred into the surrogate dam.

However, as Finn Guinness points out, "people were furiously against AI to start with, but they will get used to the idea of cloning as they did with AI and embryo transfer".

A more prevalent concern within the breeding community focuses on welfare. With so few clones on the ground, research into health problems caused by cloning remains sparse, as vet and equine reproduction specialist Madeleine Campbell explains.

"Cardiac problems, joint problems and

premature ageing have been reported in other species, but there is very little evidence to suggest they do or don't occur in cloned equines," she says.

"Studies have shown that clone foals are more susceptible to problems in the neonatal period, but we don't know the medium and long-term health implications."

For Madeleine, cloning is a matter of cost versus benefit.

"At the moment there is a welfare issue, in that we don't know enough about the associated health risks. Cloning a gelding for breeding purposes is a risk — there's no guarantee he will perform well as a stallion. And I just don't believe that producing a top

competition horse is a matter of genetics. At the moment the benefits don't outweigh the cost and the risk, so we must proceed with extreme caution."

Irish showjumper Edward Doyle cloned the grand prix stallion Samgemgee — a half-brother to the Cruising son Flexible — but the foal died

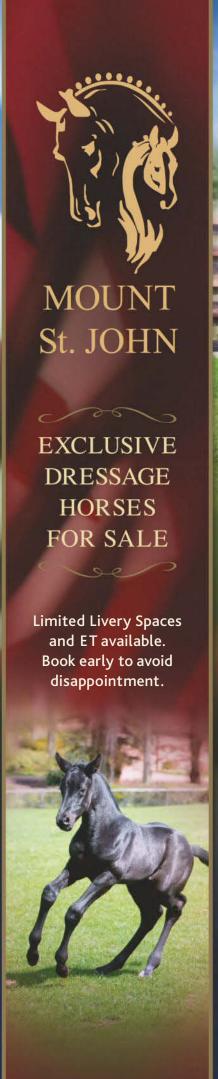


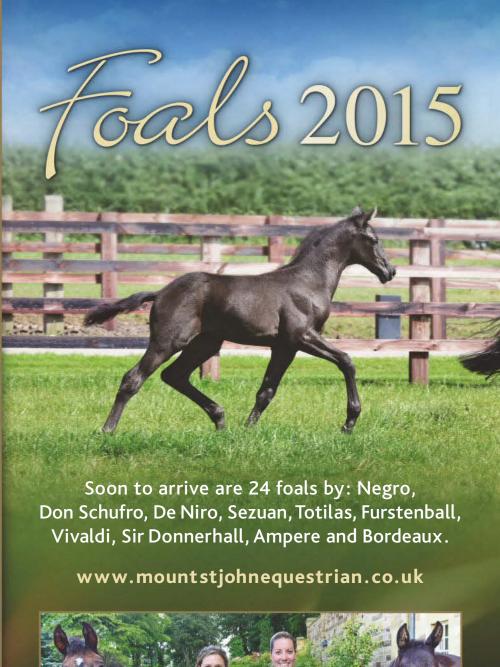
Gem Twist clone Murka's Gem will have an important role to play in Team Murka's breeding programme

at two days old. Edward hasn't been put off the idea though.

"Unfortunately the foal died due to birthing problems," he explains. "That can happen to any foal. I can see plenty of people with enough money going down the cloning route — the next few years will be very telling."

Others feel that cloning should be kept to a minimum. In 2013, Gem Twist's clone Murka's Gem was bought by Olga White, and is now based with Olympic gold medallist Peter Charles as a part of the Team Murka breeding programme. But, surprisingly,







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Sport horse breeding The impact of cloning



Peter is not a big advocate of cloning.

"It should only be done with an exceptional horse," he stresses. "Even then it's a leap of faith. I would never consider cloning any other horse in the world, except perhaps Valegro. Conventional breeding is the mainstay and always will be."

Equine vet Mark Emerson is also doubtful: "Cloning produces no genetic improvement," he says. "For me, it isn't the future of breeding because no progress is made. It's a very expensive way of standing still."

But there can be no doubt that cloning is making waves. However, for Cryozootech founder Eric Palmer, sport horse cloning will remain the exception rather than the rule.

"Nobody wants to make cloning the normal way to produce horses," he says. "I hope it will help a few top-level stallions become available and, while it's unlikely there will be a large number of clones, I hope to see good numbers of their offspring."

The jury's out on whether cloning will have a significant impact on the breeding industry, and as more clones around the world are prepared for breeding duties, only time will tell. H&H

Mary King: For me, it would probably have to either Imperial Cavalier or Call Again Cavalier, as I had the most success with them. I would clone King Boris for his personality — he was such a gem. I'm not against cloning, but it's not something I've considered. It's too expensive.

John Whitaker: I'd have to choose Milton — he was one of the best jumpers ever. I have mixed feelings about cloning: on the one hand it would be great to reproduce a superstar, but it's not quite natural. I wouldn't say I would never consider it, but it will be very interesting to see how the current clones turn out.

Carl Hester: I wouldn't clone Valegro, or any other horse. I believe that they are one-off superstars, and don't deserve to be duplicated, as the fact that they are a one-off is what makes them exciting. Second time around would feel freakish, rather than brand new.

Who would you clone?



Infamous showjumper Milton would have been John Whitaker's top choice for cloning

Pictures by Priscilla K Miller and www.trevor-meeks-photograp



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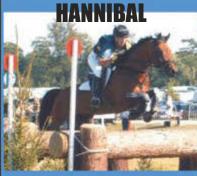




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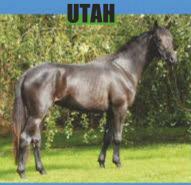
Advanced Eventer. Bay 16.1hh 9½" bone Graded Trakehner Verband, SHB, AES Stud Fee: £700 NFFR Oct 1

Hannibal is an all-round performer with tremendous natural jumping ability, outstanding temperament and charm. An Advanced eventer at eight, he competed all over Europe including the World Cup Final at Pau and was short-listed for the Swedish Olympic Team in 2004. Hannibal is a versatile and successful sire, passing on his sunny temperament, correct conformation and good looks. He has produced champions from every crop including two graded stallion sons, two elite performance tested daughters and three premiumgraded daughters. His full-brother Haarlem competed at four-star at Luhmühlen and Pau and his 7 yo son is impressing at one-star.



Eventing / Dressage. Grey 16.1hh 9" bone Graded Trakehner Verband Stud Fee: £600 NFFR Oct 1

A super charmer, Contis qualified for the 4, 5, 6yo and Novice eventing Championships, and for Oper Regional Finals at Elementary and Medium dressage. Contis offers elegance, lightness, elastic and expressive paces and a pedigree with true quality and performance on both sides. His first crops excelled both as foals and at grading, with his first filly Premium graded in 2011 and his colt Utah graded in 2011 and performance tested with record marks in 2013. His part-bred offspring from a range o types show precocious talent; in 2013 a five-year-old filly won 9 eventing points, going on to impress in 2014 at Intermediate and one-star.



Black-Brown 16.3hh 91/4" bone. Graded TBF Stud Fee: £500 NFFR Oct 1

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Chestnut 16.1hh 9½" bone. Graded TBF Stud Fee: £400 NFFR Oct 1

Parsifal offers an exciting fusion of extraordinary movement with natural jumping flair. Comments from his 2013 grading included "the best trot I have seen" and "the strongest back end I have seen on a stallion". His pedigree combines all the sporting ability and charm of his sire Hannibal with the legendary rideability of GP dressage stallion Van Deyk (sire of Kaiserdom and Kaiserkult and grandsire of Grafenstolz) through his outstanding dam Prettiness, a regional Champion. Under saddle, his willingness is a constant delight, yielding placings in 4-year-old eventing classes and a brilliant top score at his NASTA Performance Test in August.

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16.2hh, 2006 Sire: Jumbo (Skippy)

Dam: Dam Ornela (Snap Surprise) by Mangan (TB) Graded Breeder's Elite

Known as Junior at home Philanderer is the youngest of the stud Jumbo sons - all of which are Advanced eventers.

He has proved to be super talented eventing - starting the 2013 season with just four points and upgrading to Advanced by the end of the 2014 season.

Junior has his sire's outstanding jump and temperament with an extra injection of quality from his TB dam.

As well as eventing successfully (and destined to continue his eventing career in 2015) Junior also show jumped successfully at Foxhunter level last winter. His first foals are eagerly awaited this season.

Concessions available to Advanced Event mares and the dams of Advanced eventers.



The stud's outcross stallion currently being used on JUMBO mares.

This incredibly consistent stallion has combined busy stud seasons with limited outing amassing 246 points. Successes included winning the Advanced section at Aston. His oldest stock are now starting their careers under saddle and are impressing with their jump, paces and attitude, all seem to inherit his good looks and beautiful limbs.

Wish Upon A Star is one of two outcross stallions standing at Grafham Stud. He was purchased in Holland as a 2yr old on account of his outstanding conformation, lovely bloodlines and super jump. At the time I purchased him I was bowled over by his beautiful limbs and tremendous charisma - at this time I could not have predicted what dizzy heights his sire 'Gribaldi' and the great Moorlands Totilas would reach.



Advanced Event Horse 16.1hh Dark Brown Sire: JUMBO Dam: SUMMER JANE (TB) Approved BWBS

A lighter framed, more refined version of JUMBO with an extra cross of TB blood.

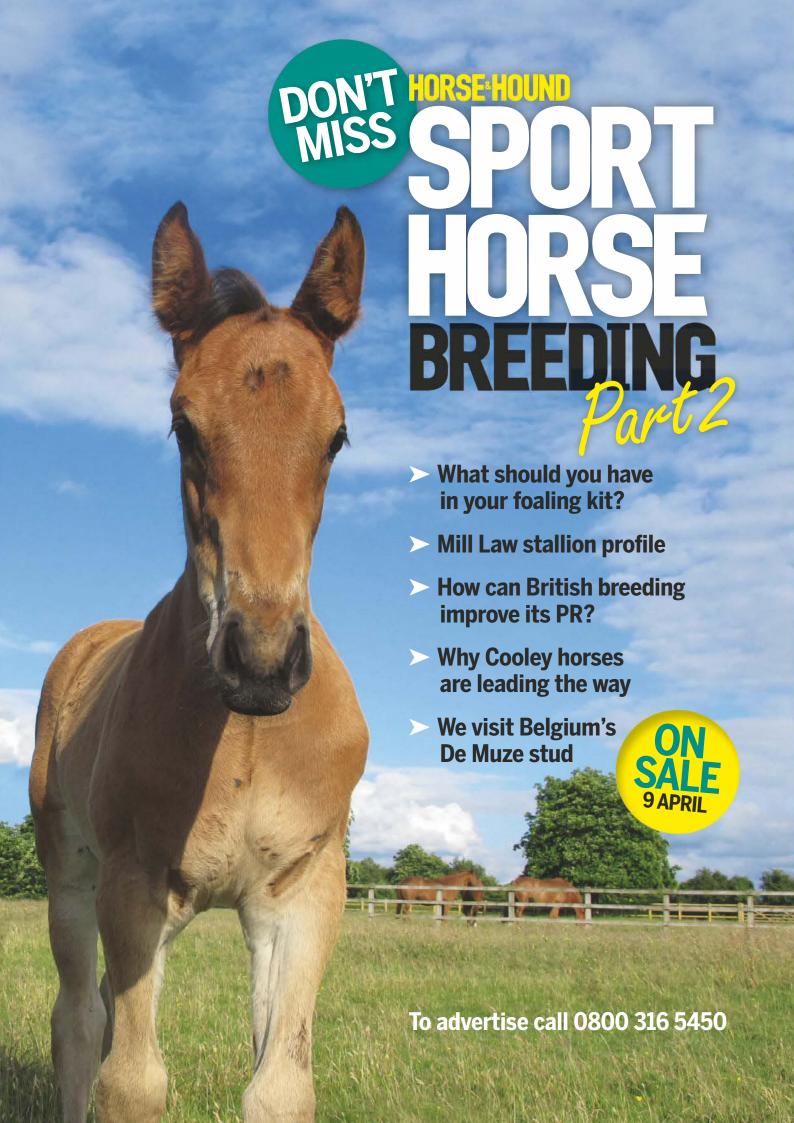
A late starter to stud duties he has already produced some lovely youngsters, the oldest of which are 8 and can be seen out eventing this season.

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National Stallion Association



The 2015 Performance Test Qualification window is now open.

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Comment

Carole Mortimer

Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst



It is not pessimistic to be prepared for the worst - equine births that are not progressing normally can go wrong quickly, leaving little time to ensure a positive result.

A 24/7 job

THE most heart-breaking outcome is the death of either the mare or the foal — something for which most people are totally unprepared — but the possibility should be thought about and planned for.

For the past 50 years, the National Foaling Bank has offered guidance and solutions to the problem of what to do with an orphan foal, or a mare who has lost her foal. Run since its inception by its founder, the indefatigable Johanna Vardon MBE, the National Foaling Bank has organised tens of thousands of fosterings as well as providing 24-hour advice over the phone.

But even Johanna acknowledges that the time has come to find a replacement to run the organisation, even though she says she will be at the end of the phone "till her dying days"

"I do need cooperation from the breeding industry and I do want a replacement," she says. "The National Foaling Bank has to go on."

Vital service

IN order to enable Johanna to help carry on there is currently a membership, for which sport horse breeders pay a nominal sum of £20. It is a cost that few pay or think about until they need the help of the foaling bank, and Johanna's records show that only eight of the most recent 200 users were paid-up



Thoroughbred foster mare Lily with orphan Suffolk Punch, Colony Xia

members — not that she turns anyone away, but it seems a small price to pay for a vital service.

While Johanna's experience is invaluable — she really ought to write the book — the need for a central database of available mares and foals is vital. The National Foaling Bank is still the place that most people call when the need arises. Perhaps it is something the new national British Breeders' Network could help Johanna with? In the meantime, perhaps all those expecting foals in the next few months could send in their £20 membership — it might be the best £20 you spend.

Johanna will give a talk on orphaned foals and the work of the National Foaling Bank as part of a foaling the mare course to be held at Twemlows Stud on 21 March.

Deadly diseases come closer

ANOTHER wake-up call for breeders is the case of the horse in Lower Saxony, Germany, who tested positive for the fatal and notifiable disease, glanders (www.eurodressage.com, 28 February).

Although it later appeared to have been a false positive, Germany lost its "glanders

free" status as a result.

The disease, which is not one associated with Europe, is zoonotic, meaning that it can be transferred to people. Prevention involves restrictions on transport, quarantine and strict biosecurity.

Australia, a country hot on who or what arrives on its shores, has currently issued a six-month halt on imports from Germany, including frozen semen - something that would not be good news for British sport horse breeders were the UK to enforce restrictions.

The case once again highlights the increasing possibility of the arrival of deadly diseases in the UK.

In the meantime we must take the threat of diseases we know we have seriously, particularly during the breeding season — peak time for the movement of semen and stock, especially vulnerable foals.

All breeders should check the health status of their mares and foals well before going to stud, and all studs should be asking for the relevant paperwork and, of course, that for imported semen. Breeders need to think twice if nobody asks for, or shows, evidence of current health status. H&H

Bloodlines



Thursden Vallye Raphael **SPSS 2003**

Breeder: Catherine Billington Owner: End House Stud Rider: Fiona Johnstone

THE Sport Pony Society Studbook (SPSS) graded stallion Thursden Vallye Raphael, a winner and champion in the show ring, is currently competing at prix st georges (PSG) dressage. He is the only British-bred pony stallion at

The 12-year-old was bought as a five-day-old foal by End House Stud in Lancashire, where he now stands. He is a son of the British-bred dressage stallion Aimbry Chester (deceased), who was trained to advanced level and competed at medium, and was also a prominent face of Baileys Horse Feeds.

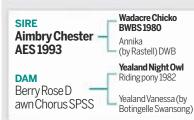
Chester was a pink-papered son of the WBS-UK graded stallion, Wadacre Chicko, and his full-brother Aimbry Cabana (AES) was the elementary national champion in 1997. Wadacre Chicko, out of a thoroughbred mare by Sea Moss, was by the Danish warmblood Atlantus, one of the first warmblood stallions in the UK.

Aimbry Chester is out of a Danishbred mare by Rastell, a significant sire of jumpers and a son of Raimondo.

Raphael's dam, Berry Rose Dawn Chorus, was a graded SPSS pony mare by the famous Yealand Night Owl, sire of champion pony stallion Colbeach Nightlight.

Night Owl brings Arab blood to the mix through his half-Arab dam. He was a grandson of Bwlch Valentino, who became one of the best-known British pony sires — he also appears twice in the dam-line of Berry Rose.

Raphael is the sire of the several high scoring sport ponies at the British Equestrian Federation (BEF) Futurity evaluations, including last year's third highest scoring event pony, Tarnbrook Take It All. H&H



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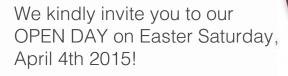
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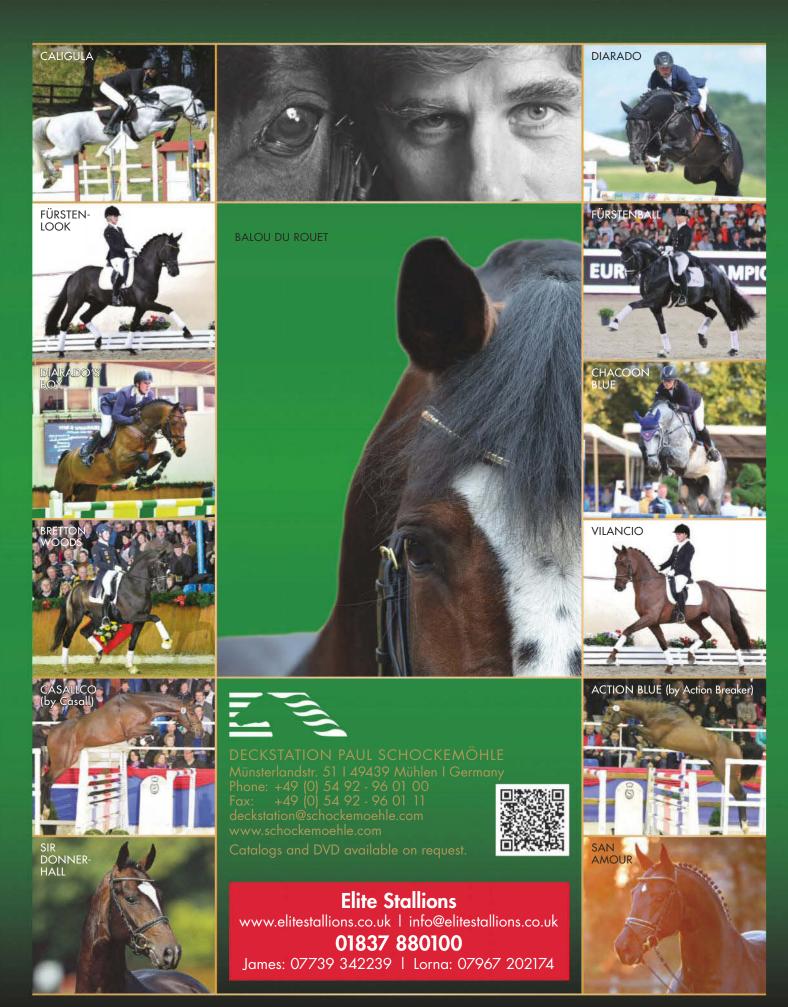


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4-8 March

BEN MAHER and Diva II triumphed in a three-way decider for top honours in the \$372,000 (£247,000) FEI World Cup

Ben describes the 10-year-old British-bred mare (Kannan x Berlioz) as "a bit hairy in the way she goes" but the pair flew round to grab a 0.28 second victory. The Hertfordshire rider, who is currently based in Florida for the 12-week Florida circuit, punched the air in delight.

'She is not so conventional, but I did not have a lot to lose," said Ben. "Iknew I would be top three, so I figured that I would have a go and with a little bit of luck here and there, it paid off."

The mare, with whom Ben won

Liz Edgar. This World Cup qualifier marks the pair's most valuable win in their 16-month partnership.

'She has come a long way on this circuit," said Ben. "[Last year] I remember being in the medium schooling jumpers classes out in the back ring and still kicking out the back rails then. It is exciting

Ben was joined in the jump-off by Germany's Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum riding the impressive Fibonacci 17 — a grand prix winner here a fortnight ago — who set the target of a smart clear in 46.31 seconds. Laura Kraut and the 17-year-old Cedric recorded a marginally slower time with a rail down, before Ben used his last draw to nail the winner's prize.

"Cedric has been one of the best horses in the world for a long time



Ireland's Darragh Kenny is runner-up in the Spy Coast Farm 1.45m on Quiz



Every time that horse puts in a performance like he did tonight it makes me want to cry

Laura Kraut is overwhelmed by her veteran Cedric



'He has such a big heart' — the week's leading lady rider, Laura Kraut, comes in third with 17-year-old Cedric

and Meredith's horse is probably right there coming into its prime," said Ben. "Diva could not have been in better company."

Lost stirrup

THE jump-off didn't quite go according to plan for the runner-up, however.

"I lost my stirrup after [fence] number two, which made me nervous because he jumps so high [that] I would not like to jump a fence without a stirrup," said Meredith.

"I made sure I got my stirrup back before the next fence, which takes a little time, and then I had a slight slip going back to the oxer in front of the VIP, which he handled beautifully. These two little things cost you a couple of tenths of a second.

"There were very wide oxers and tall verticals tonight everywhere," added Meredith of the track built by Ireland's Alan Wade. "This is championship level and it is good when it is tough — when there are only a few horses that rise to the top and jump off."

It was an emotional evening for Laura Kraut, the week's leading lady rider, who was moved by the efforts of the veteran Cedric.

"Every time that horse puts in a performance like he did tonight it makes me want to cry," said Laura. "He has such a big heart and tonight it was very, very difficult. I promised him earlier that if he was good tonight I would not make him do any more this circuit and he could have a little break. He must have heard me."

The other big class in week nine, the weekly Ruby et Violette WEF Challenge Cup, went to Hardin Towell of the USA, riding Jennifer Gates' Lucifer V. Ireland's Richie Moloney took fourth on Slieveanorra.

"It has been fun for Jennifer because Lucifer has had his ups and downs, and she has really been behind me when I believed in him so much," said Hardin.

"Last year there were some questionable moments," Hardin continued, "so it is nice to have someone with so much patience."

Earlier in the week, Ireland's Darragh Kenny finished runner-up in the Spy Coast Farm 1.45m riding the 11-year-old Quiz.

The class was won by USA's Andrew Ramsay (Welfare). Also representing Ireland in a prizegiving this week was 22-year-old Stephen Moore (Fantasy), who finished second to Germany's Laurenz Buhl in the under-25 grand prix semi-final.

Sunday's 1.50m Suncast Jumper Classic went to Kent Farrington and Willow. Darragh Kenny returned to the podium in third, this time riding Chin Quidam VDL, with Ben Maher fourth on Valinski S, quickest of the fourfaulters. H&H





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)-UP riders have fared abroad **BERTRAM ALLEN** and the 17-yearold stallion Romanov returned to their winning ways to claim victory, and a white Mitsubishi car, in the 1.55m grand prix at the CSI3* Dortmund, Germany (6-8 March). "I'm very lucky to have such a great team of horses and for Romanov to

win at the age of 17 is just marvellous," said the 19-year-old Germany-based Irishman, who looks poised to break into the world's top 10 riders for the first time. Britain's Jessica Mendoza took a runner-up spot in Saturday's 1.50m on Spirit T.

SHOWJUMPING

Edwina tops on Lintea



OATAR

CHI AL SHAQAB 5*, DOHA, 2-7 MARCH

EDWINATOPS-ALEXANDER sealed a successful show at this state-of-the-art venue with victory in the €500,000 (£360,000) 1.60m grand prix. Riding the 12-year-old Germanbred mare Lintea Tequila (Campbell x Corrado II), Edwina took a six-second advantage from Swiss rider Martin Fuchs (Clooney 51) with the only other triple clear. Third place went to Emanuele Gaudiano on Admara 2, the fastest of the four-faulters in the six-strong jump-off.

"I am very fortunate to have a horse like this," said Edwina, who was riding the mare outdoors for the first time. "At first she didn't show how fast she can go but she jumped so well, straight from the start."

Martin Fuchs claimed €100,000 (£72,000) for his runner-up spot.

"I knew I couldn't beat Edwina, so I went a bit slower, trying to make sure the overall accuracy and precision were in place," said the 22-year-old.

Scott Brash with Hello Sanctos was the best-placed Brit, returning from a rail down in round one to jump clear in round two for 10th place at the scene of their two Longines Global Champions Tour series triumphs. Michael Whitaker and Amai's four-fault first round wasn't quite enough to make the cut, and the same fate befell Denis Lynch on All Star 5. Laura Renwick and Heliodor Hybris picked up 12 faults.

But British leading lady rider Laura headed Thursday's 1.45m speed class with Rembrandt Blue, following a runner-up spot the day before.

"It has been an unbelievable run for me," said Laura of the 10-year-old. "My son Jack is my top supporter. He is here with me and his back up is incredibly important."

Laura, who was making her debut in Doha, had just missed out on the top spot the previous day, where late-drawn Frenchman Simon Delestre (Stardust Quinhon) took top honours in the opening



Edwina Tops-Alexander lands the 1.6m grand prix on Lintea Tequila

two-phase. But just 0.07 seconds separated the top two.

"It's a really nicely designed course here at Al Shaqab," said Laura. "This place is a true work of art and first class. In equestrian terms, this is the best place in the world."

Denis Lynch was a whisker behind in third riding Ho Go Van De Padenborre.

Brits were back in form in Thursday evening's 1.55m jumpoff class, taking three of the top 10 places. The class was won by Morocco's Abdelkebir Ouaddar and the 11-year-old stallion Quickly De Kreisker, owned by the Moroccan royal family. Scott Brash and Hello Sanctos, who is coming back from a break, took second, while long-time leader Michael Whitaker and Amai slotted into fourth behind Germany's Daniel Deusser (Cornet D'Amour). Laura and Heliodor Hybris finished 10th in a hefty 23-strong jump-off.

To beat Scott Brash is a special feeling!"said Abdelkebir.

Scott added: "Nobody could have beaten him [Abdelkebir] today. He has had a fantastic round. I did not even try to get him."

SHOWJUMPING

CONOR SWAIL not only won the 1.40m grand prix in the 12-week series at The Ridge at Wellington, Florida, on Fortis Fortuna, he also claimed third with Tahiti Island. Only Laura Kraut could spoil the Irish whitewash, finishing second on Zeremonie. "Fortis Fortuna is a very nice horse who has done a few of these classes now, and today she had a very fast round," said Conor.



Leopold Van Asten wins on VDL Groep W Zermie

THISWEEK'S GRAND PRIX on the CSI3* MET Tour in Oliva Nova, Spain (3-8 March), went to Dutchman Leopold Van Asten on VDL Groep W Zermie. Ireland's Anthony Condon finished fourth on the former Nick Skelton/ Robert Whitaker ride Aristio, owned by the Hales family, and Joe Davison was once again best-placed British rider in fifth on Calimero Van't Roth. Alice Watson was back in the winner's enclosure on the gold tour with the 10-year-old mare Billy Lemon (Cevin Zx Andretti), this time landing the €26,500 (£19,100) 1.45m speed class on Friday.

ONTHE COSTA DEL SOL EQUESTRIAN TOUR CSI2* in Mijas, Spain (3-8 March), three British riders filled the top five of the grand prix line-up. The class was won by Spain's Santiago Nunez Riva (Vidar) with Peter Charles third on Stapleton Mist, Robert Smith in fourth on Bavi and Anna Edwards tying for fifth on Blazer B. Anna had earlier won two classes on Chesterfield Z, while other winners this week included Lara Whiteway (Bellagio II) and James Smith with Tyson Uno.

DURING THE THIRD WEEK of the Atlantic

Tour CSI2* in Vilamoura, Portugal, Nicole Pavitt and Victor Blue triumphed once again in the big tour classes. On the medium tour, Sammie-Jo Coffin headed two classes on Arthur Van De Helle, as well as claiming top spots in the five-year-old section on Crocantino Of Greenhill Z and Follyfoot Dolce Vita DBZ. Daniel Moseley was also successful with seven-year-old Davinci T, by Numero Uno, and Philip Spivey won on Darya I Nur (Diamant De Semilly x Demonstrator).

BRITISH RIDERS took four of the top six places in the Spanish Sunshine Tour CSI3* grand prix (3-8 March). Yazmin Pinchen (Van De Vivaldi) filled the runner-up spot behind Switzerland's Janika Sprunger winner of the feature class for the second week in a row — with Holly Gillott third on Dougie Douglas. Ellen Whitaker finished fifth with Arena UK Lando and Tim Page (Santa Cruise) took sixth. Other winners this week included Guy Williams (Casper De Muze), George Whitaker (Willetton) and Tim Page (Steady The Helm).

tures by Al Shaqab, Herve Bonnaud/www.1clicphoto.com



Showjumping ROUND-UP News and views from the lower levels (21 February-1 March)

Politician proves a leader

WESTWILTS EC 28 February

SEVENTEEN-year-old Gaby Struel and her ride of only a month, the eight-year-old Politician, made the journey to West Wilts EC from their home in Cardiff to win the Horsequest novice qualifier.

Gaby, an AS-level student who hopes to become a vet, has already brought on two young horses, but one died and the other is now retired. She got "Major" from a friend, after swapping him for her old jumping pony.

"It was only our third show together and there were more $than\,50\,in\,the\,class, so\,I\,thought\,it$ would be nice to qualify. I never expected to win," she said.

Gaby has already sent off her entries for the Blue Chip Championships, but her next quest is to get Major's discovery double clears before moving him up to newcomers and Foxhunter level.

"He's a lovely horse and my ultimate ambition is a place in the bronze league final at the Horse of the Year Show," she added.



Gloria Van Zuuthoeve

THE star of

Patchetts, Herts (22-23 February), was David McPherson, who travelled from Kent to win the grand prix and Blue Chip dynamic B&C qualifier. His grand prix winner was the mare Gloria Van Zuuthoeve, a nine-year-old who has been with him for two years.

"I have high hopes for her because she's a big jumper, is careful and is better suited to big outdoor arenas," said David.

David was also involved with the winner of Sunday's major class. He has been teaching Alice Basey-Fisher while Ben Maher, her coach for the past four years, is in Florida. Alice won the 1.30m open on a catch ride, Alternativa.

"She's really straightforward," said Alice, 19, "which is a good thing because we got stuck in traffic on the way here and I had to go straight into the big class."

Emma-Jo Slater and Kim Barzilay's homebred Kimba Classic added a Blue Chip Karma Performance win to their recent B&C triumph here, holding off William Funnell (Billy Orangina) and David McPherson (Winsten XX) in the process.

Results

ADDINGTON MANOR

Bucks, 27 February-1 March
KBIS British nov.—1, BB Balou (H Rees); 2
Willow The Wisp V (C Barlow); 3, My Valiant
Prince (S Dawson Smith) discovery.—1,
Something Fancy (H Tredwell); 2, Summer
Promise (M Lanni); 3, BB Balou. Country Equestrian 1.05m.— 1, Carrighill PJ (J Crippen); 2, Amigo Van Largo (L Price); 3, Bilithya (A Taylor). EquestrianClearance. com newcomers.—1, Loughnatousa Fabio (S Hunt); 2, Romalette (J Crippen); 3, Foxboro QT (J Gillingham). **1.10m.**—1, Maximo (H Rees); 2, Trevoulter Lady Utah (H Webster); 3, Top Rock (J Crippen). **H&H Foxhunter/grade C.**—1, Strides Controe (L Collett); 2, Quainton Layla (M Lanni); 3, HSB Harriet (S Hunt). **1.30m.**—1, LK Rocky (H Webster); 2, Pallas Masterclass (J Annett); 3, Ubatsja (M Lockhart). **28 Feb: KBIS British nov.**—1, Echoes (V Ashworth); 2, BB Balou; 3, Veller (H Webster), **discovery.**—1, Consistence (Feb. 16). Balou; 3. Veller (H Webster). discovery.— 1, Quainton City Girl (R Redfern); 2, Summer Promise; 3, Whippletree Elle (C Sharpe). Country Equestrian 1.05m.— 1, Sjirki (O Springhamy; 2, Caoimhes Delight (B Mantel); 3, Womy (H Lunnon). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.— 1, Mr Bass (L Collett); 2, Elias-Nita (D Murdoch); 3, Cathena (R Smith). 1.10m.— 1, Top Rock; 2, Trevoulter Lady Utah; 3, Macgarveys Choice (P Howard). H&H Foxhunter/grade C.— 1. Strides Controe: 2, Ouainton 1 avia: 3, C.-1, Strides Controe; 2, Quainton Lay

Umberto De Fauquez (M O'Donnell). **1.30m.** 1, Victory VI (B Walker); 2, Quainton Layla; 3, Newbridges Master Brown (C Bastone). **1 Mar: KBIS British nov.**—1, Willow The Wisp V; 2, Irish Pride IV (R Redfern); 3, Diana II (B Wright). discovery.—1, Superfandango (H Stokes); 2 & 3, Halltown Lucy & Echoes (V Ashworth). Country Equestrian 1.05m.—1, Quainton City Girl; 2, Capellini II (K White); 3, Worldcup (K Rose). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.— 1, Lias-Nita; 2, Carrighill PJ; 3, Cathena (R Smith).

110m.—1, Sjirki; 2, Whisper (H Rees); 3,
Macgarveys Choice. H&H Foxhunter/grade
C.—1, Dagano II (J Fisher); 2, Romalette; 3,
Cathena. 1.30m.—1, Zahara II (J Fisher); 2 & 3,
Heathrow & Catapult (K White).

BICTON ARENA

Devon, 1 March
Pony 75cm.—1, Yo Yo (M Hunt). pony British
nov.—1, Phoebe In Colour (G Allison); 2, Miss
Twilight (O Tuff); 3, Ballinaguilkey Squiggle
(L Owen), pony 80cm.—1 & 2, Quarrystone
Howard & Aircraft (C Howard); 3, Yo Yo, pony
discovery/90cm.—1, Aircraft; 2, Lovelyhill Flyer
(B Davies); 3, Northliefth Giorgio (O Tuff); Blue (B Davies); 3, Northlight Giorgio (O Tuff). **Blue Chip pony newcomers/1m.**—1, Saving Tia Gallison): 2, Bealings Pride (E Churchill); 3, Rathsallagh Royale (G Pennington). Squibb pony Foxhunter/1.10m.—1, Bealings Pride; 2& 3, Leanola & Ching Ching (S Jinks). **BROOK FARM**

Essex, 25 February
KBIS British nov.—1 & 2, Cientha Z & Fifty-Fifty
III (R Chinery): 3, Diamond Princess (L Hines).
90cm.—1, Mosstown Bertie (S Dedman): 2, Miss Stripe (C Hamilton). **discovery.**—1 & 2, Cavaliers Sweet Dream & Cientha Z (R Chinery); Cavalier's Weet Dearlin's Certifial 2 (Kritiniery).
3, Florence W (A Rogerson). Im.—1, Drumhowan
Cavalier (M Huntington); 2, Royle Walsh (J
Horton). 105m.—1, Cavalier's Sweet Dream; 2,
Van Tibor (V Irion); 3, Jorian Van Het Mangelhof
(R Chinery). EquestrianClearance.com
newcomers/1.10m.—1, Gallant Brioche (J Butler-Table of the Contine Nobile (A Silk-Jones).

BS AREA 44

Surrey, 1 March
D&H 85cm amat.—1, Veronique H (D Smith); 2, Warmington Harrier (I Quigley); 3, Ultimate Cruise (M Gore). **KBIS British nov.**—1, Miltown Star (R Dorrell): 2. Nicos Du Carel (M Bristow); 3, Princess Tinara (K Davis). Haygain diamond Q. s Kiss Me (J Conway); 2, Templehill Merlin (S Rees); 3, Fergal Licious (J Fronda), **discovery.**— Baileys S (J Macintyre); 2, Castle Lad (L Jones); 3, Elisan (S Rees), **D&H 1.05m amat.**— 1, Cut The Corner (P Bursby); 2, Anemoon Van De

Kapel (M Ballard): 3. Ballyhathi (L Woodward) EquestrianClearance.com newcomers/10m.— 1 Anemoon Van De Kanel: 2 Caretina 7 (M Moren-Jeffs); 3, Belle Fleur (A de Verteuil).

RURY FARM

Bucks, 26 February
KBIS British nov.—1, Cabillion Z (A Rose); 2, Zirco Um Ni Z (B Walker); 3, Bamme Bamme (E-J Slater); **90cm.**—1, Caragh Star (E-J Slater); 2, Vito III (R Blair); 3, Ultimate Cruise (M Gore). discovery.—1, Bamme Bamme; 2, Ferrari (B Walker); 3, Maximus Cassini (F Semon). Im.—1, CCS Cushina Libra (J Hayes); 2, Cheers Charisma (H Thompson); 3, Candy Blue (A Dippenaar). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.-1 Equestrain-Learance.com newcomers.— 1, Dromalga Classic (C Dugard); 2, Zappa II (C Bingham); 3, Floyd III (H Brougham), H&H Foxhunter/1.20m.— 1, Clearways Angelina (H Brougham); 2, Dior Addiction (S Dyason); 3, Shraugh Golden Flame (C Whinnett).

HOUGHTON HALL FC

Cambs, 26 February
KBIS British nov.—1, Dame Blanche (J Williams);
2, Elle Van Overis Z (L Williams); 3, Gypsy Russ
(L Charlton), 90cm.—1, Torboy Magic (S Burbidge). **discovery.**—1, Greenacres Bella Du Lys (J Williams); 2, Billy Lindt (L Steven); 3, Loughnatousa Schmidt (A Clark). **105m.**—1, Torboy Magic (S Burbidge); 2, Miss Jemima (A



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Kiss Me upgrades

JESSICA CONWAY and the 15-year-old So Kiss Me galloped to victory in the Haygain Diamond at the Area 44 show at Merrist Wood, Surrey (1 March), where only a fraction split the eight qualifiers.

Jessica, who manages her parents' livery yard in Kent, started the 148cm gelding's career after he was imported from Belgium as a three-year-old by owner Faye Dodd.

'My brother, Joe, then produced 'Louie' through the grades and when Joe was out of pony classes, Faye didn't want to sell him, so I said I'd try him in senior classes," said Jessica. "He copes very well with horse distances up to 1.15m level and we're having loads of fun. He's nice to ride because he loves his job and the faster he can go, the more he likes it.'

Jessica, who has an equine management degree, is a UKCC Level 2 showjumping coach, and also runs unaffiliated jumping and dressage shows at her home.

'It's quite hard finding the time to go to shows with Louie and my novice horse, but I'm determined to make it to the Blue Chip championships," she said. "Two of my pupils have also qualified, so we will be travelling there together."



IZZYWATSON LANDS HER FIRST TICKET TO A TOP FINAL

IZZY WATSON gained her first qualification to a major final when she and Beyond Doubt II headed the Horsequest pony coral qualifier at Northcote Stud, Lancs (21 February).

Izzy, 14, got the ride on Angela Davies' 11-yearold gelding in October.

"He was a happy hacker until not too long ago,

but he's incredibly scopey, with bags of ability, and they've really clicked," said Izzy's mother Tracy, who acts as her daughter's "financier, supporter and groom".

The Watsons keep the three ponies Izzy rides at their home in Whitchurch.

'She has a more experienced pony and she's

also pinched my 148cm pony and turned him into a showjumper after he spent years in the hunting field," said Tracy.

"What also helps is that although Izzy gets on the bus to school at 7.40am and arrives home at 6.30pm, she's homework-free, so evenings and weekends are our guilt-free pony time."

Block). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.— 1, Codean (L Saywell); 2, Crambamboli (A Clark); 3, Casanova Z (S Robertson). **H&H Foxhunter/1.20m.**—1, Midsummer Night (S
Robertson). **1.30m.**—1, Carneils Wyacara S (L Saywell)

PARWOOD EC

Surrey, 24 February

KBIS British nov.—1, King Charles (J Emblen);
2, Ebabelou Lou (E Wilson); 3, Jazz Dance
Rockerfeller (L Hart). 90cm.—1, Okehurst Just
Jacko (L Hart). discovery.—1, Alexis Zorba (C
Uden); 2, Leo D'Oro (S-C Marshall); 3, Daingeann Uden); 2, Leo D'Oro (S-C Marshall); 3, Daingeann Magic Man (J Vaughan). Im.—1, Okehurst Just Jacko; 2, Taal (A Groves); 3, Hillside Freddie II (J Milton). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.—1, Lacarnos Lad (L Williams); 2, Elastique (N Edwards); 3, Rumbolds Warrior Echo (T Priest). 1.10m.—1, Whisper V (J Emblen); 2, Baltimore III (N Edwards); 3, Ivor Mission (V Chamberlain). H&H Foxhunter.—1 & 3, Abon & Dynas Tie (J Emblen); 2, Conzalez M (L Thompson).

PATCHETTS EC Herts, 22-23 February

EquestrianClearance.com newcomers.—1 Colton Playtime (B Walker); 2, Axle VI (M Hackett); 3, Spirit IX (O Wicks). **1.15m.**—1, Cassina III (S Reeve-Young); 2, Mynydd Gladiator (A Lewis); 3,

Finer Bride (L Craker). H&H Foxhunter.— 1, Fiko R (L Davies); 2, Cornado Junior (B Walker); 3, The Dollar Girl (K Speller). 1.25m.— 1, Lord Portside (T Pearson); 2 & 3, La Stampa Z & Churchill III (B Walker). 1.30m.— 1, Alternativa (A Basey-Fisher); 2, Scooby Doo Gang (B Wardr); 3, Laudatio 37 (S McTaggart). 23 Feb: EquestrianClearance.com newcomers/1.10m.— 1, Simply Billie Bunter (E-J Slater); 2, Ulieta (A Lewis); 3, Caruso D'Eres Z (T Priast). Blue Chip karma performance Q.— 1, Finer Bride (L Craker), H&H Foxhunter.—1, Fiko Slaten): 2. Ulieta (A Lewis): 3. Caruso D'Eres Z (T Priest): Blue Chip karma performance Q.—1, Kimba Classic (E-J Slaten); 2. Billy Orangina (W Funnell): 3. Winsten XX (D McPherson). 1.25m.—1, Arthur (B Walken): 2. Simply Billie Bunter: 3. Market Irminka (T Priest): Blue Chip dynamic B&C Q.—1, Aramis 573 (D McPherson): 2. Simply Almund (J Crippen): 3. Billy Olive (A Gill): QP.—1, Gloria Van Zuuthoeve (D McPherson): 2. Veni Vidi Vici (H Brougham; 3, Victory VI (B Walker)

Midlothian, 28 February-1 March

Microman, 28 February - I March KBIS British nov.— 1, Super Nova (C Cousar); 2, Miss Cassini (P Guthrie); 3, Miami Boy Cruiser (M Irving). 90cm.— 1, Tesoro (L McNeill); 2. Fogas Adare (K McGregor); 3, Palmontegraaf (A Hamilton). discovery.— 1, Dutch N Go (C Johnstone); 2, Cookie De Reve (N Williams); 3, Copper V (A Blackwood). **1m.**— 1, Lefeva (C Tonkin); 2, Jack The Lad V (C Hamilton); 3, Fogas Adare. **1.05m.**— 1, Harvey IX (A Noble); 2, Triomf L (J Ault); 3, Jack The Lad V. EquestrianClearance.

com newcomers.—1&3, Casaretta & Elektra VIII (M Irving); 2, Coosan Lux (N Mansour). **110m.**—1, UNIVINIED 2, COUSAIT LAN (WINAISOLI), AURILIAN L. 12 DS. (E Black); 2, Vurelise (L. Templeton); 3, Triomf L. 1.15m.— 1 & 2, Van De Bay Girl & Quattro 27 (E Sender); 3, Early Boyd (I Warnock), RHS amat Q.— 1, Fauber (D Harland); 2, Mira IV (J Crawford); 3, Jack Up (S Lumgair), RHS grade C Q.— 1eq, Mira IV & Harperland Micky Finn (I C Q.— 1eq., Mira IV & Harperland Micky Finn (I Warnock); 3, Amadeus (T Nicholson). 1 Mar: KBIS British nov.— 1, Bengarys Romeo (L Hiddleston); 2, Balou Fair (J McLelland); 3, Rehy Volunteer (D Edward). 90cm.— 1, Cavaliers Kingdom (S Williamson); 2, Donnadoni (L Collins); 3, Jersey Beech (M Irving). discovery.— 1, Sissi S (J Brown); 2, Jersey Beech; 3, Lilliana (A Black). 1m.— 1, Patsy II (S Ramsoy); 2, Mr Cochise (K Holt); 3, Millifield Bernused (K Hamilton). 1.05m.— 1, Ce Ilonka Van Het Meyerhof (J Crawford); 2, Kilhalle (A Gardiner); 3, El Diviro (R Kane). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers. EquestrianClearance.com newcomers. —1 & 2, Elektra VIII & Casaretta (M Irving); 3, Drumconnick Verdi (M Arnott). **1.10m.**—1, Drumconnick verd (M. Arnott). Llum.—1, Guidamdale (N. Williamse); 2, Bora Bora Van Het Kroonhof (L. Guild); 3, Corraghoe Down (H. Bilsland). Llum.—1, Mira IV; 2, Quattro 27; 3, Telstar O (J. Crawford). RHS Foxhumter Q.—1, Gabor (A. Gatherum); 2, Bora Bora Van Het

Kroonhof; 3, Zeldzaam (K Connor). **1.30m/RHS YR Q.**—1, Bailande Van De Kapel (K Connor); 2, Amaretto VI (N McArthur); 3, Her L'Amour (M Arnott)

SUMMERHOUSE EC

Clos, 28 February
Pony British nov.—1, Sillian Butterfly (J Fraser);
2, Maid Of Honour (M Sansum Griffiths); 3, Legaun
Wild Boy (I Arikan), pony 80cm.—1, Swallowfield
Simply Sooty (L Williams), pony discovery.—1,
Tilly's Dragonfly (A Clark); 2, Charlotte V (L.
Williams): 2, Talk A Charge II (E platean) Blue Williams); 3, Take A Chance II (E Notman). **Blue Chip pony newcomers.**—1, Arrow Head Quiver
(O Sheppard); 2, Prince II (R Cummins); 3, Monkey Munchkin (J Smith), pony 1.05m.—1 & 2, Sweet Delight & Quarry (O Fletcher). Squibb pony Foxhunter/1.10m.—1, Quickstar Du Jochri (J Bridge); 2, Quarry. **pony 1.15m.**—1, Belfield Boy (M Sanderson).

WEST WILTS EC

WEST WILTS EC Witts, 28 February 90cm.—1, Milbrook Cabada (L George); 2, Cara Anchises (A de Verteuil); 3, Let's Twist And Turn (J Parker). Horsequest nov Q.—1, Politician (G Struel); 2, Patriano II (R Stadley); 3, Indianna Jones IV (K Thomas). discovery.—1, Dundee (S Crawford); 2, Candy King (J Halim); 3, Indianna Jones IV. 105m.—1, Tallents Quondam (L Elkins); 2, Cornish Daybreak (K Burton); 3, Cash Cooper (S Nodder). EquestrianClearance.com newcomers/1.10m.—1, Cornish Daybreak; 2, Woodcoate Springtime (A Valentine); 3, Cruising In The Dark (K Ellison). H&H Foxhunter/1.20m.—1, Quel Ange (K Ellison). Quel Ange (K Ellison).











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CURREAND LLANGIBBY DEVAUDEN. **MONMOUTHSHIRE**

17 February

By Carl Evans

I have played cricket on a good few village greens, but until now had never attended a meet on one.

The Monmouthshire-based Curre and Llangibby Hunt met at Devauden Green near Chepstow in mid-February following an excellent breakfast in the adjacent Hood Memorial Hall. Farmers, foot followers and members of the mounted field had filed through its doors to be spoiled by a tenner's-worth of egg, bacon and trimmings.

Among this gathering were three of the four current jointmasters, plus numerous hunt officials past and present, including showjumper and former master David Broome.

For a bit of background on the hunt — and reason for the Curre's amalgamation with the Llangibby - I turned to Peter Morgan, who has held the position of hunt

chairman for three seasons.

"The packs joined in 2001, mainly for financial reasons," he told me. "It made economic sense and means our hunt country is now one of the largest in Wales. It stretches from the River Severn near Chepstow, west to Newbridge, which is over the mountain, north to Llanover near Abergavenny and east to Raglan.

'The terrain involves a little bit of everything, with a lot of big and small coverts. It's flat down the bottom near the Severn, and very undulating up on the hills.

"Foxhounds have hunted the Curre country since the late-17th century under various titles, but took the name of Sir Edward Curre in 1896. The Llangibby can claim to be the oldest pack in Wales, dating to 1641.

That is 374 years of existence, bringing the responsibility of a long history upon the shoulders of those who run the hunt.

Among them is Peter Swann, now in his third season as huntsman and joint-master after spending 10 seasons at the former Albrighton Woodland.



The packs joined in 2001 and means our country is one of the largest in Wales, says Peter M

and fantastic country



David Harris, amateur whipper-in, with hon secretary Charlotte Breese



Mike Thomas with amateur whipper-in Paul Reece

Asked what brought him to Wales, he said: "A bit more space to play with — we don't have busy roads or railways, and we can keep away from the M4, although the area we are crossing today is not the easiest. It can be wet, so farmers are not overly keen on hunt jumps, and there are a lot of forestry boundaries and small farms.

"If hounds leave by one corner of a covert you can be playing catch up. That said, I get excellent support from landowners."

He scanned the village hall: "Look, there are farmers sitting at every table."

Of the pack he said: "We have 30 couple in kennels, which is not a lot to play with, and when it comes to breeding, we have to get it right. We put two bitches in pup last year and had a pair of very nice litters by VWH Darwin and North Cotswold Grimsby, and the year before we used VWH Salisbury and Duke of Beaufort Gadsby.

"When I was at the Woodland I took advice from Martin Scott [former master of the VWH] and over the years bred some very

organ

good hounds that hunted well. An Albrighton Woodland hound I bred won Builth last year, which was quite something, and I would love to do the same here."

An (almost) all-white pack

SIR EDWARD CURRE produced an all-white pack, and respect for that tradition is one reason Peter would like to return to a single colour. "When you think of the Curre Hunt you think of white hounds," he said, "and I will be



I will ever have".

Amy Tedward, a keen young supporter

looking to breed white bitches to

white dogs, but I won't be ruthless

about it, because you have to use

colour. That said, it would be very nice to pull out a white pack, but

hounds with quality so you get a level pack that hunt well."

years in the USA with the Orange

where the local foxes ensured he

My equine ally for the occasion

County and Middleburg Hunts,

had some of the "best hunting

was George, kindly provided by

Rupert and Emma Humphreys,

that has carried numerous

correspondents, squires and members of the clergy down

and the sort of stoic conveyance

Whipping-in this season is Josh Warren, back in Britain after four

your best hounds regardless of

who helps in kennels



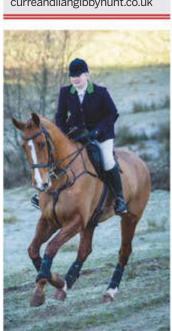
Well-mounted: Emma Humphreys, provider of a horse for our correspondent

In kennels

Joint-masters: David Adams (2012), Raymond Morgan (2012), David Stephens (2012), Peter Swann (2012) Huntsman: Peter Swann MFH **Secretary:** Charlotte Breese, email: charbre22@gmail.com Crucial helpers at the **kennels:** groom Linda Swann and handyman Paul Reece Thruster to watch: Henrietta Downs-Wheeler, 12, a Llangibby Pony Club member, who lost reins and stirrups after a stumble and picked up speed on a steep slope that turned sharply into a wood. Flung off, remounted, unfazed Preferred Christmas present: "Aflask and waistcoat," attributed to the above thruster and twin sister Francine Quote of the day: "At least I'm now qualified for the Tumblers' Ball." Helen Johns, on the floor with Midnight, aka Nightmare Loyal footies and kennel helpers: Matt Clarke (opening the country), Pip Harris (birch cutter), Gareth Baker and Pip Phillips (country work),

"Caerphilly" Phil (all-rounder)
Consistent fund-raisers
(fun ride/point-to-point
sponsorship): Alison JonesGriffiths and Debbie Watson

Website: www. curreandllangibbyhunt.co.uk



Treasurer Seonaid Page: 'It's like Scotland, only drier'

Joint-master David Stephens, whose son, the former point-topoint rider James Stephens, was to prove a humorous field master on a testing day, took his seat of responsibility three seasons ago

Before hounds moved off. David told me: "I enjoy being in the mastership — it's difficult to fit in with a working farm, and my other son Robert is doing well with a string of some 25 racehorses, which takes up a bit of my time. But if we were to lose this [hunting], what would be next?"

His fellow joint-master, David Adams, does not ride to hounds, but takes a similar view. "I'm a farmer who believes the hunt does a very good job for us by picking up dead stock, and it has a place in the community," he told me. "So many rural post offices, village shops, schools and pubs have closed that it's important we keep the hunt going."

Up to Peggy's Wood

FOR our first draw hounds were put in to Peggy's Wood while the mounted field waited in the valley below on land belonging to David Maddocks. There I met the travelling Johnsons, Helen and Philip, visitors from the Cottesmore. This was Philip's eighth pack this season during a hunting tour across many counties.

The landscape was unfamiliar to both of us, but the mountains of Skirrid and the much bigger Sugarloaf near Abergavenny now rose into view as we descended



Enamoured: Lyndon Remnant aboard his point-to-pointer



Whipper-in Josh Warren, back in Britain after four years hunting in America

into the valley. Later, from a ridge, the new Severn Bridge was bright and clear in the distance, with the city of Bristol sparkling beyond.

Secretary Charlotte Breese is one of those hunting enthusiasts that gives a pack sterling service. Now in her second stint of office, she said: "We're going so well at present and had a number of new subscribers this season. Why? Dare I say it we're very friendly, the fees are affordable and we have a nice country. Maureen Jenkins chairs our very energetic supporters' club — she was head cook for breakfast this morning and organises a ball, dances, hunt rides and a Christmas lunch that is very well-supported. And because we are an amalgamated pack we can hold two point-topoints at Howick."

And since hounds were still seeking a trail in the wood, I turned to Seonaid Page, the hunt's treasurer. Her lilting Scottish lowlands accent, apparently still true to its roots despite leaving her homeland 20 years ago, was a good fit in this landscape.

"I love it here," she said. "It's like Scotland, but drier.

'We're a small hunt, but financially we manage. We never have lots of savings, which is a worry, but with good support we get by."

We turned, climbed through Peggy's Wood and headed to a forest called Wern-y-Cwm where we assembled in fields owned by Howard Stone, before heading along a lane and on to Brian Jenkins' land. Hounds had been speaking intermittently, but without being able to consolidate on a trail — it was to be that sort of day.

Down a track, and the field cantered along the side of fields owned by Lyndon Remnant, who had joined us on his sole point-topointer. Lyndon had first followed hounds when Reg Dale hunted the Curre as a private pack for Lady Curre, and became so enamoured with the sport he would leave his

hunting kit at the kennels in order to surreptitiously pop in and get togged up when work was calling.

This nugget of information was handed over by Victoria Collins, whose father, Bob, hunted the Curre from 1987 to 1991. A visitor for the day, she met many familiar faces despite the 24-year break.

Views to the Brecon Beacons

TURNING south, hounds drew Hale Wood, and we then went back to Howard Stone's farm, with Model Farm on our left and stunning views towards the Brecon Beacons and Blorenge, the final resting place of Harry Llewellyn's famous Foxhunter. Looking no less old and just as timeless was Kilgwrrwg Church, which we circumnavigated.

This tiny, stone place of worship sits isolated in fields with just gravestones for company, a throwback to the time when folk walked to church.

Maybe one day Amy Lee Burroughs will walk up its aisle, but for now she was just happy to be out on her Irish Draught-cross. A professional singer, she was beaming as I trotted alongside.

Curre and Llangibby

HUNT APPOINTMENTS

FOXHOUNDS

Duke of Beaufort's. 14 Mar, The Hunters Hall; 16, Trull; 18, Southernwood, The Rocks; 21, Upper Chalkley Farm, 10.45am. Isle of Wight. 14 Mar, Downers Farm, Chale; 18, Thorley Manor, Thorley; 21, Wolverton Farm, Yafford, 12 noon.

STACHOLINDS

Devon & Somerset. 12 Mar, The George, Brompton Regis; 14, Brendon Two Gates; 17, South Radworthy; 19, Old Ashway; 21, Honeymead, 10.45am.

DRAGHOUNDS
Cheshire. 14 Mar, Red Lion, Pickmere; 18, Knott Inn, Rushton Spencer, 12.30pm. SC & RMA Sandhurst. 15 Mar, Elvetham Estates, Hartley Wintney, joint meet with Mid Surrey Farmers' and side saddle day; 18, Swallowfield; 22, Felix Farm, Binfield,

BLOODHOUNDS

Farmers. 15 Mar, Dower House, Sarsgrove, Four Shires. 15 Mar, Sandbeck Park, Maltby, 12 noon.

South Downs. 15 Mar, Temple Valley Farm, Ayresford; 22, Abbotstone Farm,

HUNT SECRETARIES

Ayresford, 12 noon.

WE are happy to continue to publish hunt appointments. Please send your meet cards to Polly Portwin at our editorial address, or email to polly.portwin@timeinc.com

She then offered, unprompted: "I am always smiling when I'm riding my horse and hunting," revealing that sense of elation felt by thousands every year.

After a circular detour through fields and a wood called Cae Pwtto, we retraced our steps uphill to Wern-y-Cwm. From there, hounds picked up a trail and ran to Hale Wood, but unable to cross fields to join them we waited by Cefngarw Wood before the day was concluded.

It had been a frustrating day for our huntsman. "Two weeks ago we were flying," he said, "and hounds were really motoring. They went well in the frost, but now there's an end-of-season feeling." H&H



Huntsman Peter Swann MFH and hounds: the Curre is known for its white pack



LLANGEINOR PENTYRCH HUNT GILFACH GOCH, GLAMORGAN

25 February

By George Bowyer

HUNTING correspondents who go to Wales should be paid danger money. Not because of the huge jumps or perilous terrain—although there is certainly some of the latter—but because of the spelling. Taking notes while riding a horse is difficult enough, even in the age of digital recorders, but when you innocently ask the name of the first wood to be told "Penrhiwfer", then you know you are in trouble...

Until recently, the Llangeinor and Pentyrch were two separate hunts, but the building of the M4 a couple of decades ago, followed by the continuing encroachment of the outskirts of Cardiff into the Pentyrch hunt country, meant it slowly became unviable. The combination of the two hunt countries has now produced ample area for one pack of hounds to operate.

I stayed the night before my outing with Darren and Anna Hughes. Darren, the son of senior joint-master Brian, is an old friend and colleague from the days of the rallies and marches before the hunting ban and we sat up late into the night reminiscing about old times.

The next morning, as we went out to do the horses before breakfast, I was, perhaps, not feeling quite as fresh as I might have been. When I say "we" did the horses, technically it was Anna doing most of the work. I was acting in the role of observer, while ingesting of several cups of hot, sweet tea and talking to the pigs next to the stables.

Breakfast comprised homegrown sausages — and I can announce to the world that Maes y Deri sausages are indeed the cure for the common hangover that the world has sought so long.

Refreshed and revitalised, I clambered aboard Lofty, my 24-year-old partner for the day, and hacked with Darren from Rhiwceiliog Pencoed to the meet at Gilfach Goch.

Gilfach Goch was the



The Llangeinor Pentyrch Hunt benefits from good support from the locals

inspiration for Richard Llewellyn's 1939 novel How Green Was My Valley? The meet was at the Griffin Inn, which is the oldest building in the village. It was hosted by second generation landlady and long-time hunt supporter Pam Cantwell, whose late husband used to be chairman of the hunt supporters' club.

We were joined by professional huntsman Mark Revnolds, with a

mixed pack of 13½ couple, some English but mostly Welsh hounds. Mark was assisted by Steve Pothecary, who has been amateur whip for a number of seasons but is taking up a position with the Minehead Harriers next year.

After enjoying Pam's famous hospitality, including in my case, a sandwich from veteran supporter and point-to-pointer Iris Thomas who, when I was



A joint-master since 2012, Cyril Liley following the meet from the Griffin Inn, the oldest building in Gilfach Goch

somewhat slow off the mark to indulge, warned: "Don't jump at them, for God's sake! They might bite you," we prepared to move off.

Brian made the traditional speech of thanks, explanation of the day's activities hunting within the law and, prompted by his wife Mair, announcements of forthcoming events. Behind every great man lies a great woman.

Beautiful to the eye

THE first trail of the day was laid on the hillside below Caerlan and above Tonyrefail. We made our way to the top of the hill, over farms owned by the Dando and Thomas families. As well as affording fine viewing of the hounds working their line below us, we could see across the old Pentyrch country to the high-rise blocks of Cardiff in the distance. We could also see into the Ystrad Taf Fechan country, but were not in the area in which the Llangeinor Pentyrch can, as one hunt wag put it, "look down on the Glamorgan". The weather on the day was

changeable. First thing, the fog was thick enough for us to wonder whether the day might be delayed or cancelled; while we were hacking to meet it was drizzling, but by now, it was a beautiful day. Beautiful to the eye, that is, but not, apparently, to the nose. It was not what you would call a "screaming scent", but hounds were working their line.

Brian and Mark work on the hound breeding together, although, as this is Mark's first season as huntsman, the input concerning the current pack came from his predecessor, Alex Ford, huntsman for 27 seasons.

Alex had been in hunt service pretty much all his life, having only ever had one non-hunting job, when he worked for a year as a forester. He started at the Fitzwilliam under Steve Roberts and worked his way up through the ranks with several well-known hunts before starting his marathon stint at the Llangeinor.

Mark started as an amateur whip locally, then working

professionally with several packs of foxhounds and beagles, before coming back to the Pentyrch and then the Llangeinor Pentyrch.

Hound breeding follows predominantly Welsh lines, using sires from the Pembroke, the David Davies, the Gelligaer Farmers and the Pentyrch, but bringing in some English blood from the Beaufort, United and VWH. They have a good litter from VWH Mitre, but Mark's current hound of the season — "a cracking hound, out every day, tough as a boot" — is Cruiser, by Zetland Cromwell.

Picnics and plaits

WITH poor scenting on the lower ground, it was decided to lay the next trail into Penrhiwfer wood above Caer Lan. Although less relevant after the shooting season, woodland hunting here is easier than elsewhere.

Masters look away — this will cause you pain — the Llangeinor Pentyrch only have one major shoot in their hunt country, as



Brian Hughes MFH is heavily involved in the breeding of the hounds

opposed to the one-per-farm found in many other areas.

During a pause, I was fortunate to meet Rob Lewis, a visitor from Caerphilly and a student of equine science at nearby Pencoed College. From pockets secreted who knows where he produced a veritable picnic — two ziplock bags containing beef pasties, sausage rolls, chicken goujons and sandwiches, all in vast quantities, together with two flasks, one of port and the other of sherry. He definitely wins the prize for the best-provisioned hunting person that I have ever met.

He also won the award for the largest number of plaits I have ever seen in a mane — I stopped counting at 17 and I hadn't reached the end of the neck yet. He explained that the horse was on working livery at the college and that the students got it ready as part of their course. They certainly weren't stinting on their side of the bargain.

Unfortunately scenting conditions were not a lot better



Farmer and lifelong hunting man Edmund Roberts rides a recent winning hurdler



The mixed pack of 13½ couple of hounds with predominantly Welsh bloodlines

Llangeinor Pentyrch

Joint-master Brian Hughes and hunt staff looking out across the Llangeinor Pentyrch country



Jane Jones enjoys hearing 'hound music echoing through the trees'

in the woodland than they were outside, but hounds were making a game job of it and, as always, their music echoing through the trees was stunning. There are few sounds more certain to raise the hairs on the back of the neck than hounds and horn in concert.

Listening with me was Mervyn Page, the hunt's subscriptions secretary. Despite having Welsh parents, Mervyn was born and lived in London, moving to Wales some 20 years ago.

Formerly a rugby player, he also had a brief and unsatisfying affair with golf — "there's no adrenaline rush in hitting a little white ball around" — so he bought himself a "great, big horse" and became what he calls "a Llangeinor junkie".

Having advised masters to look away earlier, now it is the turn for subscribers — a Llangeinor Pentyrch subscription is only £200 per year — with no field money. What a bargain.

Mervyn is particularly pleased that the hunt has a good following of young supporters, and he goes out of his way to encourage and make it easy for them.

"At a fiver a head per day, I must be the cheapest babysitter in the world," he says.



Members of the field following hounds on a difficult scenting day

A changing countryside

AS we left the woodland just after 1pm, we found that the fog had suddenly started to come in again. Twenty minutes later it was looking as if it might stop proceedings, but 20 minutes after that, it had cleared again, although leaving a biting wind in its wake.

As the hounds drew along the steep hillside above Evanstown, and we kept pace along the tops, I was warned to look out for dips in the ground that could indicate where mine-workings might

collapse under a horse's weight. This could have merely been locals playing with the newcomer's head, but as there used to be 11 working mines in just the bit of valley that we could see, it did seem feasible.

Edmund Roberts, lifelong hunter and farmer of the land on which we were standing, was out on a horse that had recently won a hurdle race at Ffos Las, trained by his daughter, Beth. He had seen various agricultural changes as well as the industrial ones over the



Hunting campaign stalwart Darren Hughes riding alongside Claire McKay

In kennels

(2001), Cyril Liley (2012) **Hunt secretary:** Derek George, tel: 01656720607) **Huntsman:** Mark Reynolds Whipper-in: Steve Pothecary Meet days: Wednesdays and Saturdays **Hunt country:** The southern boundary is the M4, Port Talbot in the west, east as far as Cardiff and north up into Rhonda Maesteg Valleys Quote of the day: When asked what he used on the trail, traillayer Mark Shepherd produced a half-used bottle of fox urine from his pocket. "Eew! No wonder you're single..." was

Joint-masters: Brian Hughes

years. A lot of the grazing land had been improved, which in turn led to enclosure of the new pastures — and all new fences made a big difference to the hunting.

the response

Another significant change over the past two decades has been the advance of the start of the lambing season, with first lambs now coming two weeks earlier than they used to, meaning the hunting season has had to move with it.

At the end of the day, we returned to the Griffin Inn, which I had now learned was affectionately referred to as "the Bog", for a bowl of soup and a drink.

As I thought about the people I had met during the day: Louise Williams, a hairdresser (known to travel to rural customers on horseback); Yvonne Davies, a smallholder struggling to run her business and cope with severe rheumatoid arthritis; Claire McKay, a local chiropodist; Danielle James, who works locally for women's aid — it seemed ironic that this is a Labour Party stronghold, represented to a man (or woman) by anti-hunting MPs, with their prejudices about hunting being only for the rich and privileged.

How completely they fail to understand or represent their own constituents — ordinary, decent, hard-working people, not a duke or duchess among them, who merely wish to see the countryside once again managed for the benefit of the whole community, by people who understand how it works.

Not very many miles down the road is the Banwen Miners Hunt. If that name alone does not make any politician sit back and question their thinking, they should be ashamed. H&H

Chips serves up a win



reports

Two female jockeys land popular wins in Sandown's

military races, while a novice hurdler earns himself a tilt at a Cheltenham bonus. **Marcus Armytage**

IF AP McCoy can organise to go out on a winner as well as Sally Randell did in Friday's 152nd Grand Military Gold Cup (sponsored by Military Mutual), then he will have done well. Even Randell would concede that fate played a considerable part in her victory on the Charlie Longsdontrained Loose Chips.

Randell, a former Lance Bombardier, has for some time been one of the foremost military riders. She was already the most successful female in the race with two wins but, in her mind, she was already retired when she took a call from Longsdon earlier in the week pleading for her to have one last go.

Next season she is due to take over from Grand National-winning trainer Andy Turnell and for most of the week she had been attending one of the mandatory training modules at the British Racing School in Newmarket. She owed her victory to Harry Wallace, rider of the neck runner-up Merrion Square, as much as

Wallace, a tailor by trade, was booked to ride Loose Chips and team up once again with owner



Former Lance Bombardier Sally Randell (right) closes the curtain on her raceriding career with victory aboard Loose Chips in the Grand Military Gold Cup

Major John Thorneloe, with whom he won the race in 2012. But he was subsequently asked to ride Merrion Square.

"How often do you get a call from Paul Nicholls?" he said. "I've been trying to get a foot in the door there for 12 years! At the weights I thought Merrion Square had a better chance and my maths was nearly right.'

To add insult to injury Merrion Square unshipped twice on the way to the start.

Randell, who would not look out of place with the best amateurs at Cheltenham this week, used all her experience and strength in a finish to get Loose Chips home by a neck in a tight finish with two and a quarter lengths back to Max Chenery on A Tail Of Intrigue.

'That was amazing," said

Randell, 30, who only completed her training module 3½ hours before the race, before whipping round the M25.

'This is goodbye. I've been persuaded back once or twice but this is definitely it. I'm Andy Turnell's assistant, I love him to pieces and I'm hoping to take over the licence from the start of next season. Andy's going to be my right-hand man.

Longsdon said that the drop in grade to military races had 'rejuvenated Loose Chips.'

"He's a bit of a monkey," he said. "The top handicaps had soured him but on his day he can still do it."

Consistent Beach rewarded

LT-COLERICA BRIDGE was a popular winner of the Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Memorial Hurdle on the Seamus Mullins trained Kastani Beach, a standing dish in the event, having been placed three times in it before.

Mullins, like the late Toby Balding whose partner Philippa Downing owns a chunk of Kastani Beach with the trainer, is a great supporter of the military races. Hell will have to freeze over before he fails to provide a runner in one

Going to the second last, it appeared that Jody Sole had stolen the race on Smart Catch, who seemed to be galloping resolutely up the hill with a decent lead. But the horse stuttered into

BONUS HUNTERS

HORSES who have won the Imperial Cup at Sandown and then won at Cheltenham within the week, securing a £100.000 bonus:

Olympian (M Pipe): Coral Cup four days later.

Blowing Wind (M Pipe): County Hurdle five days later.

Gaspara (D Pipe): Fred Winter three days later.

the hurdle. He stopped to almost a walk at the last and was swamped by his rivals. Behind him it was quite tight, but once Bridge, who had been fifth going into the last, found a gap, Kastani Beach was most willing to go through it.

Birthday celebrations

DR RICHARD NEWLAND will chase a £100,000 bonus from William Hill in the County Hurdle with Ebony Express after the novice won a terrific William Hill Imperial Cup, narrowly denying young Tom Garner and Oliver Sherwood with Rayvin Black.

It was a good birthday present for Newland's daughter Felicity, 21, who was celebrating her birthday with friends at the course and was sent up to receive the trainer's prize.

"I hope he squeezes into the County Hurdle," said Newland, who will also run his Grand National winner Pineau De Rein the Pertemps Final as a warm-up for Aintree.

After the six-year-old Ebony Express won at 33-1, Newland explained: "He won his first two starts very impressively, but he had to have three runs to get into the Betfair Hurdle and he wasn't quite right on his third start and, on reflection, I probably shouldn't have run him because he hled

"He was then brought down at the second last in the Betfair and I think he'd have been fourth. But he'd been working well since." H&H



RIDE OF **JE WEEK**

TOM GARNER on Financial Climate (pictured, left) in the William Hill Handicap Chase at Sandown on Saturday. Apart from giving Oliver Sherwood a nervesettling winner the weekend before Many Clouds goes to war in tomorrow's Gold Cup, if you are going to force the issue at Sandown in testing ground you need to make the most of your jumping. Garner got the eightyear-old into a terrific rhythm.

Comment Richard Johnson

All roads lead to Cheltenham



HE build-up to the Cheltenham Festival is always high pressured. It's nerve-racking as everyone—trainers, jockeys, lads and owners—is hoping that nothing goes wrong at the last minute.

As a jockey you want to make sure you do a good job. When it's going well Cheltenham is the best place in the world; when it's not going so well it can be an extremely hard week. Ideally you want to get off the mark as soon as possible as an early win will give you that confidence boost.

Cheltenham has an amazing atmosphere though — Gold Cup day is like no other day of the year. Everyone is on great form and excited; so much hard work has been put in to get there. You just hope the horses can do themselves justice and perform to the best of their ability on the day.

A nice book of rides

I have several good rides. In the Ryanair Chase I'm on Wishfull Thinking. As a 12-year-old you might think he's a bit old for that, but he's been in as good form as he's ever been in and he's already got two big wins under his belt this season (the Old Roan and the Peterborough Chase).

He's a 25-1 shot but I'll be disappointed if he doesn't run well. He seems in very good order at home, and there's no reason why be shouldn't be in the mix.

One of my best chances is Cheltenian in the County Hurdle. He finished second at Newbury in the Betfair Hurdle last month and won the Champion Bumper in 2011. He's a high-class horse: he's big and strong and he's an improving sort.

Silviniaco's the one to beat

I don't think I have a ride in the Gold Cup this year, which is a shame, but I'll be interested to watch.

Silvinaco Conti is the best horse in the race, and, as a jockey, I definitely believe he's the one I'd want to be on.

It will be interesting to see if he handles it this year, he didn't quite make it up the hill last year [he was fourth]. If he stays, he'll win.

He's been in good form this

season and ran very well in the King George. All of Paul Nicholls' horses are in fantastic order and he does very little wrong as a trainer, so you'd have to be watching Silviniaco Conti.

If you take him out, the race is wide open — Lord Windermere won last year but he hasn't done much since. He'd enjoy the better ground and you have to respect him.

I also think Coneygree is one to watch. I was very impressed with him when we won the Denman Chase [when Richard picked up the ride as Nico de Boinville was off]. I thought he jumped really well and he ticks all the right boxes. He's a very exciting horse and should run a very big race.

When it's going well Cheltenham is the best place in the world; when it's not it can be a very hard week

A harsh ruling

JASON MAGUIRE has to sit out the Cheltenham Festival following a 14-day non-trier ban picked up at Ludlow on Born To Succeed. I understand the British Horseracing Authority has to be clear cut on horses doing their best every day of the week, but sometimes a young horse can pull too much and you want to educate them. He felt the horse was beaten and he was trying to look after it — it wasn't a case of not trying.

If a horse is being stopped I'm all for throwing the book at the jockey, but when he's looking after a young horse it seems harsh.

Last year Jason was off injured, so to miss the Festival because of something so simple must be very disappointing.

Meanwhile, since AP announced he was retiring, more and more people are at the races. It's busy everywhere he goes.

He has a great following and it's brilliant for the sport. I don't think he realised how full-on his "final tour" was going to be when he revealed his plans last month. H&H



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Two out of two Peacock's impressive display for Willcox



The wait for good ground gives Patricktom Boru and Evan David the win

BRECON & TALYBONT LLANFRYNACH, BRECON

7 March

By Brian Armstrong

BRIDGEND owner-trainer Roger Willcox saddled Patricktom Boru and Lauberhorn — his entire string — at Llanfrynach, and won with both of them.

Patricktom Boru, making his seasonal debut under Evan David, got the better of a sustained duel with eventual third Harpsy Cord, whose moderate round of jumping included the application of brakes approaching Llanfrynach's famous drop fence.

'Patricktom Boru lost condition in his coat in December but we weren't worried as he never worked badly," revealed Roger, joint-owner with Bill Corrigan. 'We've been waiting six weeks for better ground. That's four races he's won for us, plus a fourthplace finish [in the 2014 Dunraven Bowl Novices' Championship Hunter Chase] at Chepstow. We'll

aim him at that again and you might have just seen the winner if it's run on good ground."

Lauberhorn overcame some sketchy jumping to retain his unbeaten record in completed point-to-points. Initially held up in rear, the eight-year-old sprinted clear of Highly Unlikely and Chesnut Annie when Anna Metekohy asked the question entering the home straight.

Lauberhorn has now won six of his eight points — he parted company with Anna on the remaining two occasions - but was pulled up by Gina Andrews when tackling Stratford's bigger obstacles in May's AGA Championship Final.

"He's very fast over fences when he meets them right but he's not always fluent," said Roger, who was celebrating his secondever double. "That's why he ran badly at Stratford. We'll run both horses at Howick next weekend but I'm not sure about another hunter chase for Lauberhorn. Pointing is his game."

We've been waiting six weeks for better ground. That's four races he's won for us, plus a fourth-place finish at Chepstow

Roger Willcox on Patricktom Boru's penchant for good going

ROSIES PEACOCK will seek a second Lady Dudley Cup success after providing the centrepiece of John Mathias' Llanfrynach treble. Dai Llewellyn's 12-year-old ran on resolutely to battle home ahead of Tiger Rag, who had chased him throughout the final circuit. The 2012 Lady Dudley Cup winner has now won 24 races, including 16 partnered by John, but this was his first Llanfrynach victory.

"He's only run here once before, when runner-up to Silver Story in this race three years ago," recalled Dai. "We've had him more forward and run him earlier this season than ever before, but he actually needed today's race. He'll go to the North Ledbury on 22 March, Lydstep on Easter Monday, then the Lady Dudley Cup a fortnight later [19 April]."

Rosies Peacock displayed his customary enigmatic pre-race side as John attempted to climb aboard.

"We took him on to the course as usual, tried to mount John at the marker hurdles on the bend and succeeded after the drop fence about 100 yards later," said Dai, ruefully. "We thought we had found the secret but trust him to find another way of holding up proceedings.

John had initiated his treble when the Katy Price-trained Champagne Benefit had finished alone in the hunt race. The winner of three of his four outings this season, Champagne Benefit will be aimed at the inaugural running of Aintree's DBS Spring Sales Point-to-Point Bumper Final on 15 May.

John moved into double figures for the season aboard restricted winner Desertmore View (see box, above). In front from flagfall, Desertmore View gradually stretched his field until his final challenger, 6-4 favourite Minellacelebration, hoisted the white flag three fences from home.



RACHEL HOOTON'S Desertmore View is a horse to follow after his easy Llanfrynach restricted win. The seven-yearold ground his five rivals into submission after making all the running under John Mathias.

Desertmore View, who was bought by Pembrokeshire trainer Marc Barber six months ago after winning one of his three Irish points, had fallen at the last when well clear on his UK pointing debut at Larkhill in February.

"His trainer, Denis Leahy, offered him to us but said we would have to be patient and that he was a gamble," explained Marc. "He had a few muscle problems in his backend but physio and two months' roadwork have sorted them out. You can't train him hard, and he either walks or

canters, but he doesn't need a lot of work, so everything falls into place. The gamble has paid off."

Desertmore View will now be aimed at Chepstow's Dunraven **Bowl Novices**' Championship Hunter Chase on 24 April.

"We'll look after him and run him sparingly, as John feels we should aim at Cheltenham's **Hunter Chase Evening** as well," said Marc.

"We thought Llanfrynach would suit him but John feels it has actually been too sharp. Big, galloping tracks like Chepstow and Cheltenham should be ideal.



A gamble pays off for trainer Marc Barber as **Desertmore View and John Mathias romp home**

Firstwin

Ella Darwin

ELLA DARWIN (pictured, below) received an early wedding present when opening her account, at the second attempt, aboard her boss Andrew Coveney's Behind The Scenes. The 26-year-old, who marries farrier Joe Gillings in August,

looked booked for third before being gifted Godstone's ladies' open in a last-fence mêlée. Little Legend led at the last, but he fell, bringing down Done A Runner (Lucy Wheeler) and hampering Country House, who ejected Anna Sansom. Behind The Scenes inherited the lead to win by a distance.

"The 3 Mugs and a Vet Partnership gave him to Andrew as my



schoolmaster," said Ella. "I do everything with him at home, including hunting every week. We've been out over 20 times this season, including Thursday. I'm from Yorkshire and hunted with the Pendle before I moved south, but my background is in Flat racing. I spent two years as a work rider with [Oxfordshire trainer] John Gallagher before I joined Andrew."

Repeat Business returns

JEFF BIRD'S Repeat Business looks hunter chase material after taking Godstone's conditions contest in a hack canter. The seven-year-old, trained by Jeff's brother-in-law Jonathan Tudor, sauntered home eight lengths clear under James Tudor to justify the three-hour journey from Jonathan's Merthyr Mawr yard.

Repeat Business is now unbeaten in four completions since being bought for £3,500 at Doncaster in August 2013 and looks a leading candidate for Cheltenham's Connolly's Red Mills Intermediate Series Final on 29 April.

"We've come here to see how he copes with bigger fences and an undulating course," said Jonathan.

"He can jump a bit flat but he's adapted well. We don't want to overface him so we could bring him back here on 29 March before going hunter chasing."

Repeat Business was greeted in the winner's enclosure by a contingent of Jeff's friends.

"There are 11 of us, including three from my Emmanuel College, Cambridge days," smiled Jeff, whose blue and pink silks are based on the college's rugby colours.

"Everyone has enjoyed themselves and hopefully there will be more opportunities like this. Giving the horse a low-profile introduction last season has definitely paid off for us."

Hopes of a Bird-Tudor double were dashed when High Hatton ejected James at the penultimate when he was well clear of his restricted field.

MID SURREY FARMERS' DRAGHOUNDS, GODSTONE, SURREY

8 March

By Brian Armstrong

ANDREW COHEN'S Quinz achieved the win required for Aintree Foxhunter qualification by turning Godstone's men's open into a procession. The 11-year-old, jumping superbly for Joe Hill, led from flagfall and easily accounted for Anseanachai Cliste, the winner of four Irish races last season.

Winner of the 2011 Racing Post Chase for Philip Hobbs, Quinz won one of his two Larkhill point-topoints before finishing a 10-length runner-up to top hunter chaser Paint The Clouds at Doncaster in February.

"Ifeel he's a better horse now and that he would win the second Larkhill point-to-point if it was run again," said Joe, 19. "His jumping has improved by a country mile. It's all down to schooling him on the morning of the race, which opens his muscles. I think Dad

His jumping has improved by a country mile, thanks to schooling him on the morning of the race, which opens his muscles

Joe Hill has the measure of Aintree contender Quinz

Quinz makes quick work



James Tudor pilots Repeat Business to victory in the conditions race

to give me the ride."

been disappointed if he'd won by 10 lengths ridden out. I'm

absolutely delighted that Andrew

and Dad had the confidence in me

Point-to-point

Hillonahigh

KINGSTON BLOUNT RACING CLUB, OXFORDSHIRE

7 March

By Polly Portwin

REIGNING champion point-topoint trainer Alan Hill enjoyed three training victories with Ravethebrave, Start Royal and Brians Well on a day for favouritebackers. Six of the day's eight winners headed the betting.

A large crowd enjoying drying, spring-like conditions saw Hill's son Joe secure a comfortable victory in the three-runner men's open race with Ravethebrave, the horse that gave Joe his first career victory at Black Forest Lodge in November 2011.

"The horse had a hard race last time out at Higham in January when placed second," said Alan. "We are delighted he has qualified [for the men's open hunter chase finals at Cheltenham at the end of April] and we aim to run him there."

In the ladies' open, Gina Andrews edged one winner closer to her career century between the flags when making all the running on Start Royal for the local trainer. This was very much a "home" victory for Hill, who lives within walking distance of the course and part-owns the horse with Michael Avery, along with course chairman, clerk of the course and meeting secretary Stewart Nash and his wife Hilda.

"Alan bought the horse from Doncaster Sales several years ago and although he isn't the easiest to train, he is unbeaten around this course," said Nash, who was particularly pleased with the large crowd that saw 69 runners head to post.

James Tudor's journey for his sole ride aboard former course chairman Rodney Mann's Brians Well was worthwhile when they came home the only finishers in the eight-runner restricted.

The consistent Full Trottle finished full of running under Sam Painting to land the intermediate race, also a qualifier for the hunter chase finals at Cheltenham.

Celtic Intrigue was a popular winner for jockey Andrew Barlow

and trainer Michael Kehoe.
Owned by Andrew's father Mark, the front-running former chaser was in training with Tom George before turning to pointing at Cottenham in December 2013.
Andrew — whose next ride will be on his father's other horse Brackloon High in the Foxhunter Chase at Cheltenham tomorrow (13 March) — returned to raceriding three years ago following retirement approximately 10 years ago.

With good entries for the 2m5f open maiden, the first race of the day was split, with the eight-runner first division going to the Pauline Harkin-trained Lady Barfad. Following a brief delay when Jack Day was unseated on the way to the start and had to be passed fit by the course doctor, Katie Lyons rode Cyrius Moriviere home to win the second division.



THE STORY BEHIND THE NAMING OF KIMS QUEST

LLANFRYNACH winner Kims Quest obtained her name when Beth Roberts and Dai Hughes bought her as a three-year-old at Goresbridge in 2011.

"We went there to buy a horse for Beth's cousin, Kim Thomas," explained Dai. "Kim didn't buy anything but we saw this one showing lots of

spirit, which we liked, and bought her for €850 (£610). We called her Kims Quest, as it captured the spirit of the day."

Ridden prominently throughout by Darach Skelly, Kims Quest battled home ahead of Milaneen, the only other finisher from 11 starters in the first division of the maiden. "She deserved that as she's been second in four point-to-points and placed in a bumper and over hurdles," added Beth. "She can be horrible as she's always fly-leaping and bucking and you should see the bruise where she bit my arm, but you forgive them everything when they win like that."

Glory for the Drinkwaters

WORKING TITLE secured his third win of the season when claiming glory in the Kingston Blount Racing Club (KBRC) members conditions race for the Drinkwater family, who owned, trained and rode the winner.

The race had been sponsored by a founder member of the KBRC, Bob Groves, and his family, in memory of their sports-loving son Jack, who died tragically in 2010.

The KBRC was established in 2010 when this meeting, formerly run by the Oxford University Hunt Club, was suffering from dwindling support.

With four meetings on the course, it was the intention of the founders of the club to help provide additional funds to maintain the course and ensure that the early March meeting continued to take place.

Annual membership is £20 and includes a discounted car park label and free racecard. There will be two races held for members of the club during the season.

Oxford University maintains its close links with the course, with members of the Bullingdon Club presenting prizes in the

Over the past 100 years, the

Oxford University maintains its close links with the course. with members of the Bullingdon Club presenting prizes in the club race

KBRC.established in 2010, was formerly run by the Oxford University Hunt Club

Faber Cup has been competed for at the Oxford University Drag meetings and was awarded to Ravethebrave, the winner of the men's open.

DUCKS& DOUBLES

Beaufort's) Chelsea Jennings (Blackmore & Sparkford Vale) Craig Hoggart (Derwent) Flla Darwin (Mid Surrey Farmers Drag) Jemima Cope (Sir W W Wynn's)

Hedley Webb (Duke of

Trebles

John Mathias (Brecon & Talybont) Will Biddick (Blackmore & Sparkford Vale) Dickie Collinson (Suffolk)

Lady Barfad takes emotional open maiden victory

THE Attlefield partnership enjoyed a taste of success as owners of the Kingston Blount open maiden division one when Lady Barfad, ridden by Toby Betambeau, got the better of second-placed Mr Raj on the run-in.

The syndicate consists of farmers Patrick and Juliette White, Michael McNeill, Bill Adams and his daughter Ro. Juliette was entrusted with the third-season mare following the death of her sisterin-law and the victory was an emotional one for all connections.

"This is a wonderful day but I just wish that my sister-in-law was here to celebrate with us," said Juliette.

Diamond's four and counting

COLLEGE VALLEY & NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND. **ALNWICK**

8 March

By Brian Armstrong

TOCKY MCKIE'S Crazy Diamond became the first horse to win four point-to-points this season when running out an impressive winner of the mens' open. Held up by Nick Orpwood behind pacesetter Ballyvesey in the early stages, Crazy Diamond forged 20 lengths clear of his main rival after taking the lead five fences from home.

The 11-year-old former eventer, a sixth winner from six runners for trainer Jessica McKie, remains unbeaten in his new discipline. and could be a contender for the National Leading Horse Award if continuing to race between the flags.

"He's been eventing all his life so is used to competing on firm ground," said Tocky, mother of the winning trainer.

"He certainly won't have minded today's faster surface. We might aim him at Kelso's Buccleuch Cup maiden hunter chase on 13 April.

On the eve of the Cheltenham Festival, Tom Oates' Dun Faw Good was an apt winner of the

He's been eventing all his life so is used to competing on firm ground. He certainly won't have minded today's faster surface

Tocky McKie on Crazy Diamond, who remains unbeatenin all his races

three-mile maiden, the final contest of Alnwick's four-fixture season. Dun Faw Good's grandam, Dun Gay Lass, was one of the unluckiest losers in Cheltenham Foxhunter history when caught in the dying strides after iockey Martin Claxton's iron had broken on the run-in in 1991.

Given a confident front-running ride by Catherine Walton, Dun Faw Good forged 10 lengths clear in the straight to give Catherine's mother, Claire Walton, her first training success at the very first attempt.

"I rode her dam, Dun Rose, to win the 2005 Buccleuch Cup," recalled Tom, the Alnwick clerk of the course.

"Phyllis Claxton then gave her to me as a wedding present. Dun Faw Good learned a lot in her five runs last season and she's definitely been suited by today's better ground." H&H



Committed to the cause

ITH the season now reaching full swing, one could be forgiven for taking one's eye off what lies ahead and just around the corner. So it was refreshing when the Point-to-Point Authority (PPA) announced it has drawn together individuals from the sport's key stakeholding bodies to form a "race programming" committee.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA), Master of Foxhounds Association (MFHA), Point-to-Point Secretaries Association (PPSA), Point-to-Point Owners & Riders Association (PPORA), the Jockey Club and the Press Office will all have representation on the committee which, put very simply, has been tasked with encouraging more participants into the sport - both equine and human.

The committee will deliberate key issues such as race planning, penalty structures, retention of participants, economic impact, communications, sponsorship, costs and relationships, regulation and qualifications.

I do not envy the task of those sitting on the committee, because the solutions to existing challenges are not straightforward to implement and will require buy-in across the sport. Nevertheless, race programming is something that must be embraced and scrutinised if point-to-pointing is to prosper in years to come.

As a stakeholder and southern area jockeys' representative on the PPORA committee, I will be voicing my thoughts on the matter at the next PPORA meeting and I would encourage everyone to contact their local association rep to do the same. We have to act now to bear the fruit of our labour in the future.

One issue I will raise is the scheduling of hunter chases on weekends clashing with pointto-points. At a time when horse and rider numbers are low, this further dilutes the pool of available participants and races like the three-runner hunter chase (Fontwell, 22 February) do nothing to promote our sport. This is something that should be high on the race programming committee's agenda. H&H

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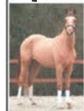


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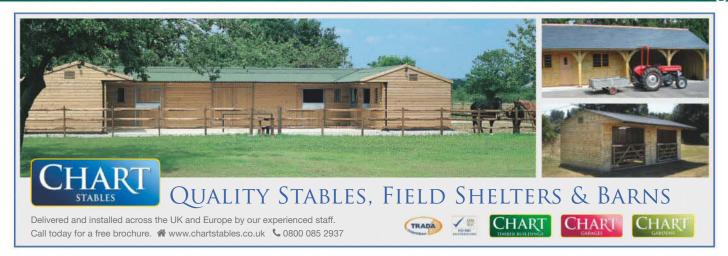


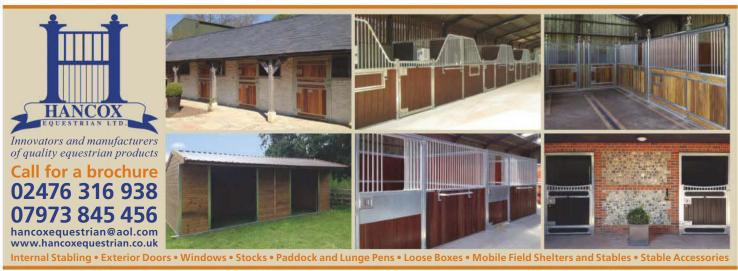


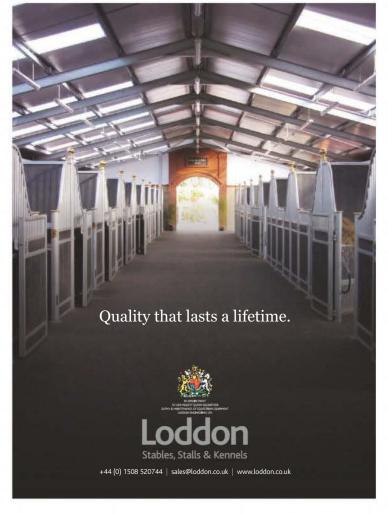


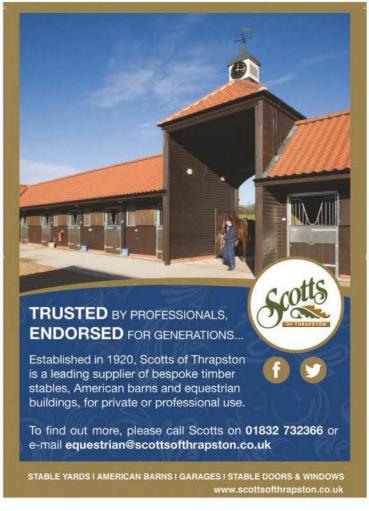
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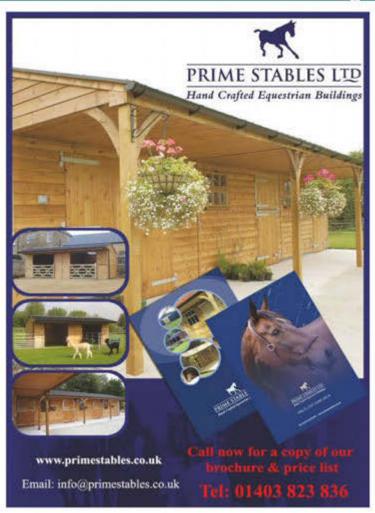
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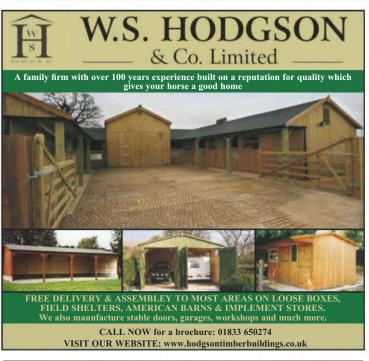
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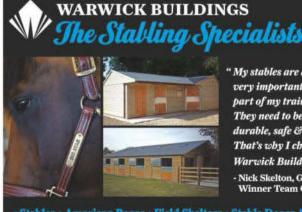
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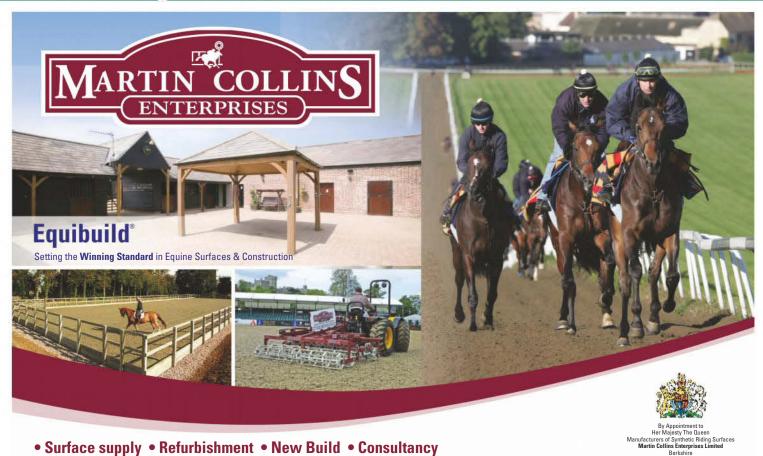






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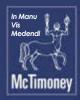
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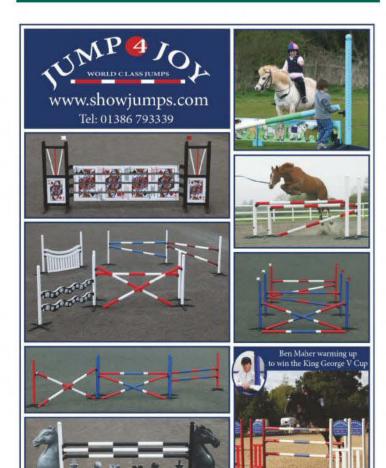
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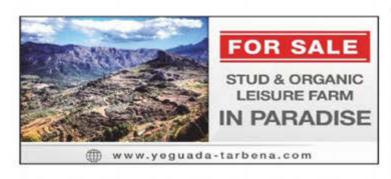
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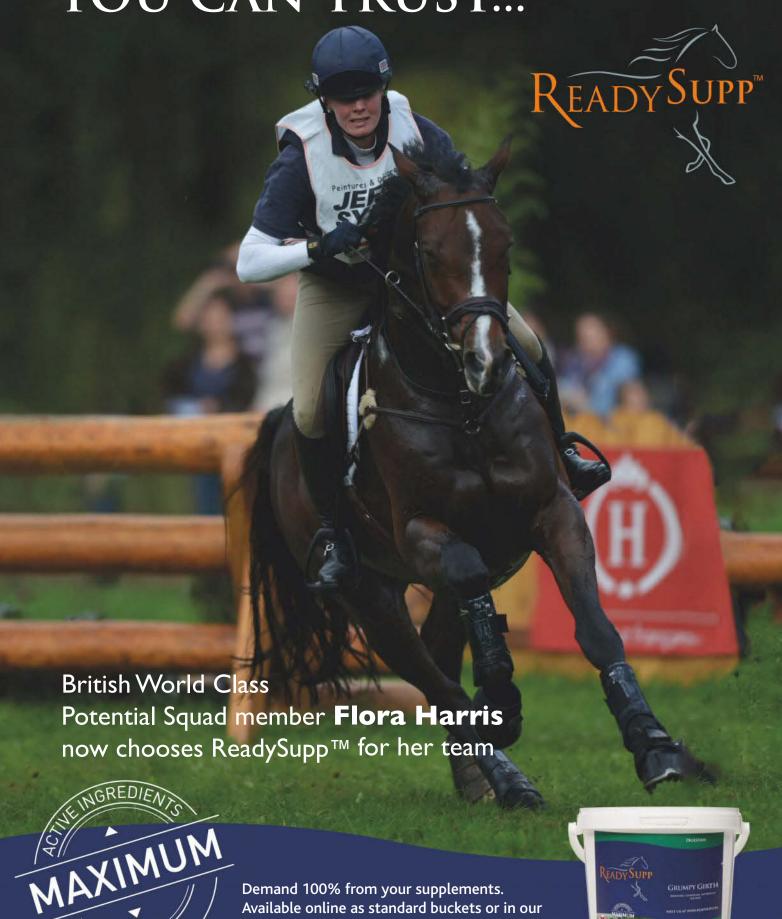


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 outbuildings can be included
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